

Internationalism

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3-ring electoral circus--

Capitalism maneuvers to keep the right in power

The 1992 political campaign will literally be a three-ring circus this year, with the candidacies of George Bush, Bill Clinton and H. Ross Perot. The ruling class is very much aware that the deepening economic crisis is building pressure for the working class to return to the class struggle to defend its interests. Therefore, despite contingent difficulties in doing so, the bourgeoisie is still committed to keeping the right in power and the left in opposition -- the same division of labor it has relied upon for more than a decade. Under this division of labor the right implements austerity and attacks the working class directly, while the left controls and subverts working class resistance, rendering it harmless to capitalism.

This is a difficult political ploy to achieve under the current conditions of decomposition and open recession. For one thing, decomposition has engendered a tendency for workers to disengage from bourgeois political parties, to become apathetic. This is a reflection of demoralization and disenchantment, rather than a positive development of a class consciousness of the necessity to reject bourgeois elections. As such it only increases the malaise within the class during the current reflux. The unprecedentedly low participation rates in the presidential primaries this spring are manifestations of this disengagement. The growth of marginal, or peripheral parties and candidates, such as the environmentalists, neo-fascist or regionalist/separatist parties in Europe, and the anti-politics campaign of Jerry Brown in the U.S., are manifestations of this phenomenon.

In addition, the seriousness of the economic crisis and worsening standard of living has created a politically unfavorable climate for the re-election of President Bush. The fact that the bourgeoisie has essentially exhausted the various palliatives that it had its disposable in previous recessions to apparently revive the economy in time to facilitate the re-election of the right has added a new layer of difficulty in assuring the bourgeoisie's desired election results this fall. Incumbents everywhere are having trouble to maintain their positions under current conditions, in Europe as well as the U.S.

Steps have been taken to assure that the left will not come to power, even if the recession continues to worsen and Bush cannot manage to win reelection in November. For almost two decades, the Democratic party has generally been controlled at the national level by the left of the party. Both the candidates nominated and the platform adopted have reflected this fact. This made the party look like the "captive" of the unions and minorities and facilitated the shift of "center" or moderate voters to the Republican candidates in the election.

continued on page 3

IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE L.A. RIOTS

CAPITALISM PREPARES TO ATTACK ALL WORKERS, BLACK & WHITE

The rioting that erupted in Los Angeles on April 28 after the acquittal of four white policemen who had brutally beaten black motorist Rodney King on March 3, 1991 and the ideological campaigns unleashed around the riots constitute the most important event of past year in the history of the development and realization both the meaning of decomposition in the richest country in the world and the political strategy of the capitalist class for the period ahead. It is crucial that revolutionaries and militant workers understand the true meaning of these events and the attacks that have given birth to.

While the rioting was not confined simply to Los Angeles, (it spread to a dozen major cities, including San Francisco, Seattle, Las Vegas, Detroit, and Atlanta), the worst disturbances were centered in Los Angeles. By the time it was over 60 were dead, 2300 wounded, and 12,000 arrested. Damage was estimated at \$717 million, including 3100 shops, warehouses and businesses destroyed, and, along with them, 100,000 jobs had disappeared. This made it far more devastating than the Watts riot in 1965 that left 34 dead or the Detroit riot in 1967 that left 43 dead.

Poverty and capitalist decomposition caused the riots. The root cause of the riots lies in the stark conditions of poverty and decomposition that afflicts all ethnic groups in society, but especially the black population worst of all. The list of deplorable conditions facing the black community seems without end. Here are some of the most well known examples:

- soaring infant mortality rates -- twice as high for blacks as for whites;
- rampant crime: the biggest cause of death for black males between 15 and 24 years of age is homicide -- for black males 15 to 19 the biggest cause of death is a bullet; 23 percent of black males between 20 and 29 are either in prison or on probation; though blacks constitute only 12 percent of the population, 45 percent of the prison population is black;
- a failed education system: the high school dropout rate in the inner cities runs from 30 to more than 45 percent;
- a black male born in Harlem has a lower life expectancy than a male born in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world;
- a black child is three times more likely to have a one-parent family than

a white child;

- 30 percent of AIDS victims are black;

-- chronic unemployment, squalid housing conditions, inadequate medical care are characteristic of minority neighborhoods where blacks are concentrated.

A third threat to the millions of people in the black community is the expressions of capitalist decomposition. Rage and discontent bubble beneath the surface, pent up, ready to burst.

In Los Angeles, the situation is particularly bleak. The area is hard hit by the recession, with a loss of nearly half a million jobs. 100,000 young people, mostly black and Hispanic, are members of gangs in Los Angeles. As many as 10,000 young people live off the drug trade. Nearly 700 deaths due to gang violence were recorded in the past year. The contrast between the opulence of Beverly Hills and the misery in ghettos like South Central L.A. bears stark testimony to the bankruptcy of capitalist society. The not-guilty verdict in the Rodney King case, outrageous even for bourgeois "justice" was just the straw that broke the camel's back.

Rioting is not a working class response to the crisis.

While the conditions, frustrations and anger that led to the rioting are understandable, rioting as such is not an expression of working class struggle. Rather it is an act of rage, born of desperation, without perspective and counter-productive. It presents a tremendous opportunity for the bourgeoisie to unleash campaigns of ideological mystification to divide the working class against itself (racism), bolster the state's repressive apparatus and to manipulate the election campaign to maintain the current division of labor between left and right -- which is precisely what has happened.

Riots always obscure the consciousness of the working class. Riots immerse the working class in the "people," a classless entity. The violence is not class violence, not directed against a class enemy. It many ways it is a random violence, a thrashing out. Unemployed blacks beating a white worker who happened to be driving a truck through the ghetto serves only capitalism because it pits members of the working class against each other. In fact there was almost no conscious anti-system content in the riot. Con-

frontations with the police were minimal, unlike the riots of the 60s in which most deaths occurred in clashes with the cops. There were no attacks on the symbols of capitalist power. In fact the rich, bourgeois neighborhoods and the downtown business district were left alone. Most of the energy of the L.A. riot was directed at looting neighborhoods in which the rioters live.

The capitalist class provoked the riots.

The L.A. riot did not happen by accident. The bourgeoisie was well aware that trouble was brewing. Not only did they do nothing to avoid it, they actually provoked it. This can be seen in:

- the constant broadcasting of the videotape of the Rodney King beating to stir up emotions and anger in the black community;
- the provocative statements of the police in allocating money for "riot" duty -- planting the idea, if it did not exist already;

-- the decision of the police to give the rioters a free hand at the outset. Despite all the talk of contingency plans and preparedness, Police Chief Daryl Gates left his post to attend a fund-raising event for a campaign to oppose attempts to reform the police department -- another provocation in its own right. Also, the cops retreated from a confrontation with rioters at a moment when widespread violence might have been averted;

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Police Brutality p.2
- Recession p.3
- Unions vs workers p.3
- Imperialist chaos p.4
- Germany p.4
- Readers' Forum:
- Military production p.5
- Capitalist decadence p.5
- Decomposition p.6
- Poemic: Working Class Terrain p.8

After the L.A. riots...

continued from page 1

— the failure of cops to cordon off the riot area, letting white motorists ride into the area only to be attacked by rioters;

— the refusal of the cops to provide protection to the Korean neighborhood in order to promote confrontation between blacks and Koreans there;

— the mysterious delays in deploying police and national guard forces.

It is impossible to believe that all these errors were accidental. This is not the Keystone cops, but the repressive apparatus of the most powerful, best taught bourgeoisie in the world. Even though it knew it was playing with fire, even though they knew the riot would expose the fragile nature of their social order and the depths to which decomposition has ripped apart the social fabric, the bourgeoisie consciously unleashed a maelstrom in the streets of Los Angeles in order to achieve some very important political goals.

A launching pad for racist ideological campaigns by capitalism

The bourgeoisie is using the riots as a launching pad for ideological mystifications to control the working class as the economic crisis continues to deepen:

—to polarize society around the question of race, pitting black against white, dividing the working class against itself.

— to heighten a sense of powerlessness and despair in society, which forces

people to feel that they must rely on the state and thus provide ideological cover for beefing up the repressive apparatus of the state;

— to define the division of labor between left and right in American politics (i.e. racism/anti-racism) and rekindle interest in the electoral campaign and boost the chances of Bush for re-election.

Seldom has a single episode in the daily life of society contained within it so many elements of the present historical situation.

Despite the fact that there was widespread agreement in the American population condemning the King beating, the bourgeoisie managed to use the riot to stir up racial division. Public opinion polls showed that 78 percent of American whites believed that the police in the King case were guilty, compared to 79 percent of blacks. Defense lawyers for the four accused cops told the jury and the nation watching on TV that what the cops did to Rodney King was not brutal, but normal police procedure. The police, they said, are a thin blue line that stands between decent people and the animals, the criminals. Implicit in the way they said it was the assertion that the "decent" people are whites and the "animals" are black. The purposeful unleashing of the riot was designed to prove that assertion, to manipulate racist fear and mistrust among whites by showing blacks running wild in the streets. The media was an important part of this



Riot police and troops patrol Los Angeles streets.

campaign too. The footage we watched on TV clearly showed that at least one-third of the people looting were not black, but Hispanic, whites, and Asians, but the sound track always said "blacks." What was really news about this looting was the fact that it was poor people and young people of all ethnic groups who were so desperate and filled with rage that they participated in the looting.

To replace the videotape of the Rodney King beating which had been used to whip up emotions in the black community for months, we were now treated to repeated screenings of the footage showing four black rioters dragging a white truck driver from his vehicle and beating him. This was better than the commercial depicting Willie Horton going through the revolving door in Bush's 1988 election campaign to stir up racist fears. The fact three black people came to the trucker's rescue and saved his life was barely mentioned on TV. We were definitely not treated to repeated viewings of their efforts. Interestingly, two of the rescuers, a woman and her brother, said they were at home watching the beating on TV and got in their car and drove to the scene to help him. The police department is also equipped with TV sets but no cops jumped in a car to come to the victim's aid. The goal of the media campaign was to hammer home the propaganda message that decent people must rely upon the cops to protect society from inner city blacks.

The looting and shootouts between Asians and blacks provoked by the bourgeoisie in the Korean district only enhanced the racial hysteria. The working class was left with a bewildering image of these events. There were barbaric confrontations within the population involving criminal elements, petty bourgeoisie, the sub-proletariat and even some workers. There was rampant racial antagonism. There was the image of social calm being restored by a massive display of police, national guard and military personnel — the forces of capitalist repression.

The use of racism to divide workers against themselves is a classic tactic of American capitalism, and that is precisely what they are trying to do today.

After the riots, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Reports published cover stories on "America: Black & White."

While just weeks earlier, public opinion polls showed that American workers believed the economy was the number one problem in America, now the campaign was underway to convince us that race is the main issue. The liberal and leftist groups are dutifully playing their role in capitalism's division of labor by organizing an "anti-racism" campaign in response. The ruling class will snicker as the real problems facing black and white workers in America today — the

economic, political and social bankruptcy of capitalism — are ignored, and instead society is polarized around the question of race.

The racism campaign is also being used to set the parameters for the division of labor between left and right in American politics. Following the collapse of the Cold War, the bourgeoisie experienced some difficulties in fine-tuning their political division of labor. Many of the ideological campaigns that had been relied upon for years, like anti-communism, peace movements, etc. were no longer relevant. Now, the issues are defined. The Republicans stand for law and order (a thinly-veiled racist appeal) and blame the riots on past social welfare programs introduced by the Democrats in the 1960s. The Wall Street Journal even goes so far as to call for the abolition of the minimum wage as a means of ending unemployment in the ghetto. The Democrats blame the Republicans for exacerbating social divisions through their budget cuts in social programs for the past 12 years and call for new social programs to solve the problems of the inner cities. The whole controversy is being used to breathe life back into a very lackluster electoral campaign.

The bourgeoisie seeks to keep the working class struggle from getting on track

The bourgeoisie has consciously taken the risk of unleashing the riots and racial hatreds, which threaten to expose the depths of its social decomposition, as a preventive measure against the development of the class struggle. The ruling class does not for a moment believe its own propaganda about the end of the recession. It knows that the economic crisis is worsening, and that this will increase the pressures for the working class to take up the class struggle again in its own defense. The objective conditions pushing the working class to break free of the shackles of the reflux in consciousness and combativeness that followed on the heels of the collapse of the stalinist bloc and the unleashing of the massive ideological campaigns about the triumph of "democracy" are growing steadily.

To forestall a new wave of class struggle the American bourgeoisie once again resorts to its all standby racism. Workers must reject this trap. The real problem facing workers, black, white, yellow, is not the race question, but the class question. It is the destruction of capitalism and its replacement by communism, a society controlled by workers, in which production is guided by social need, not profit, which will lay the basis for cleansing human consciousness of the racist filth engendered by capitalism. This is the fundamental truth in the present reality.

TO STOP POLICE BRUTALITY WE MUST DESTROY CAPITALISM

The beating of Rodney King was no aberration. This kind of thing goes on all the time. In capitalist society, the police are the shock troops of the ruling class.

Sometimes cops may reunite a lost child with its parents or solve a crime, but in the final analysis their reason for existence is to maintain capitalist social order through the exercise of force and violence.

Brutality, fear, beatings, intimidation — these are the stock in trade of the police, whether its Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, apartheid South Africa or democratic U.S.A. Even if specific police officers may have had their sociological origins within the working class, they have gone over to the enemy class and become the legitimized thugs of capitalism. They are the enemies of the working class.

Police brutality originated as a weapon against workers in the early days of the class struggle against capitalism. The terror tactics of roughing people up, cracking heads, harassment, beating people, shooting people, treating people as subhumans, provoking violence to serve as pretext for further repression, all these were honed in the fight to stop workers from improving their working conditions and standard of living.

It is true that today police act like an occupying colonial army in black and Hispanic neighborhoods, and that young black people are subjected to police harassment more often than others, but it is incorrect to see the problem simply as a racial issue. This is precisely what the ruling class wants us to do in order to divide white and black workers against each other. It is not "white people" whose interests the cops defend, but capitalism's interests. The cops beat poor black people today. Tomorrow they will crack the heads of strikers — black, white and brown — and provide protection for scabs who try to steal our jobs. Police brutality must be denounced as an expression of capitalist state terror.

We must also denounce the entire "debate" orchestrated today in the capitalist media, whether its on the

themes of the "quest" for justice, or racism/anti-racism, or reforms of the police department. All of these ideological campaigns serve the purpose of obscuring that fact that is capitalism itself that is responsible for the situation we face today.

Those, like Jesse Jackson, who call for federal civil rights charges to be brought against the cops serve capitalism by perpetuating the myth that justice under capitalism is possible. The fact is that the phrase "capitalist justice" is a contradiction in terms. The problem is much greater than four individual cops. If the four accused cops had been convicted, nothing would have changed. Cops would still be cops, and brutality would continue. It's not the individuals who are the real problem, but the capitalist system that is responsible. The working class must oppose and denounce police brutality, but the only way to solve the problem is the destruction of the capitalist system.

The use of racism to divide workers against themselves is a classic tactic of American capitalism, and that is precisely what they are trying to do today. That is why liberal and leftist groups are being used by capitalism to organize an "anti-racism" campaign in response. The ruling class will snicker as the real problems facing black and white workers in America today — the economic, political and social bankruptcy of capitalism — are ignored, and instead society is polarized around the question of race. Just as he used the hysteria campaign around Willie Horton in 1988, Bush will use the riots and racist mistrust as a springboard for his reelection this year.

The working class is going through a difficult period. The deepening economic crisis is pushing workers to once again take up the class struggle and to confront capitalism. At the same time, capitalism is trying to divert us into seeing the essential problem as a problem of race. Workers must reject this trap.

—INTERNATIONALISM, MAY 1, 1992 (excerpted from an leaflet distributed during the Los Angeles riot.)

The recession is not over; the worst is yet to come

Ruling class propaganda declares the recession over and urges us to stop worrying about economic problems. It's not surprising that they do this — after all it's an election year and if everyone thinks the economy is going to hell in a basket it's going to be more difficult to maneuver an election victory for George Bush.

It's true that there is a certain improvement in some of the economic statistics tabulated by the government: a 2.4 percent growth rate for the first quarter of 1992, a slight decline in the number of workers filing new unemployment claims, a slight increase in home and auto sales, an increase in durable goods orders, etc. But the question is, do these statistics mean there really is a recovery?

Quite the contrary. The current situation actually demonstrates the overall weakness of the economy and portends another catastrophic down-

swing after the elections. Even the bourgeoisie admits the "recovery" is weak and sluggish — particularly on the east and west coasts, which of course is where the largest concentrations of population are.

Whatever signs of recovery the bourgeoisie can point to are the result of an unprecedented manipulation of the economy. The primary weapon has been the relaxation of credit to encourage consumers to start spending again. This is a standard policy of the bourgeoisie, used often to give the illusion that the economy is moving again, especially when a recession threatens to complicate a presidential election. The purpose of this economic manipulation is to facilitate Bush's re-election.

However, this year the economy was so bad that lowering interest rates didn't work the same way as in the

past. Consumers were reluctant to spend because of the fear of layoffs. In order to achieve their "sluggish" recovery, the bourgeoisie had to lower the prime rate seven times in a single year to its lowest level in 27 years. The pitifully small nature of these improvements must be very disappointing for the ruling class. They have fired a cannon big enough to kill an elephant but have only managed to bag a tiny mouse.

The fact that this gigantic manipulation of the economy has had such minuscule impact, shows what really bad condition the economy is in. After the election, neither the policies nor the so-called "recovery" can be maintained. The economy is still as unhealthy as it as ever been since on the onset of the open economic crisis in the late 1960s. The sustained use of credit to rekindle the economy is a palliative that has been used up. The American economy does not exist isolated from the world economy. The current recession is not a uniquely American problem, but a world recession, spreading to other countries. America's major trading partners, including Japan and Germany are slipping deeper into recession, to join England and Canada who are already at the depths of economic decline, and will not help the American economy sustain the artificial growth of the first quarter.

To make matters worse for the American ruling class, the impact of capitalist decomposition in the international arena has dashed all hopes of international coordination in trying to create the illusion of a sustained recovery. This is the first recession to occur in the period of capitalist decomposition, developing within the context of a collapse of the western bloc, growing pressures for an international trade war, and a breakdown in international discipline, which in the past led members of the western bloc to subordinate their own immediate interests to those of the U.S. Gone are the days when the U.S. could call on its bloc members to adjust interest rates in accordance with the needs of fostering economic recovery in the U.S., permitting capital to flow from Europe to the U.S. as it did in the early 1980s. Germany needs capital to fund its reconstruction of the former East Germany and has defied

American policy and raised interest rates to attract capital. For its part, Japan has stopped investments in the U.S. and is actually calling capital in from its holdings in other countries to shore up its economy at home.

The world economy never really recovered from the last recession. No matter how much they brag about the "go-go" years of the Reagan era, all they really managed to do was to hide the open recession, while actually leaving the overall economy in a weakened condition. Whole industries, like steel, and auto, were left a shriveled remnant of past glories. Factories were shut forever. Hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs in manufacturing. While there's a lot in the press now about corporate "downsizing" and permanent layoffs of white collar and professional workers today, the process began in the 1981-83 period in the blue collar industries. Government statistics indicate that 2.2 million jobs have been lost during the recession. There is no possibility that American capitalism will ever put all those people back to work and create jobs for new workers coming of age. For nearly six months the Bush Administration tried to hide a Census Bureau study which showed the true legacy of the "unprecedented economic growth" of the '80s: The number of full-time workers earning poverty-level wages skyrocketed from 12 percent of the workforce in 1979 to 18 percent in 1990 — to more than 15 million workers. And of course the bourgeoisie's definition of what is "poverty-level" is completely arbitrary and artificial. The number of workers who cannot afford a decent standard of living on the wages they earn may be double what the government says. What the economic growth of the '80s meant for the working class as a whole was a growing impoverishment.

The capitalists gloat over the fact that new claims for unemployment compensation have dropped ever so

slightly. But this is because the unemployment situation has improved, but because over the last decade the bourgeoisie has tightened up the criteria for qualifying for unemployment insurance, to the point where only 30 percent of the jobless are eligible to receive benefits. In contrast in 1974, two-thirds of the unemployed were eligible for benefits. In May unemployment jumped to 7.5 percent, or 9.5 million workers, the highest official unemployment since 1984. These official figures, as we have frequently pointed out, mask true unemployment which is at least double the official amount if underemployment (the 6.5 million who work part-time but want to work full-time), and the 1.1 million discouraged workers (those who have given up looking for jobs that don't exist) and an estimated 1 to 2 million homeless people are counted. That's a real unemployment rate of more than 11 percent.

In past recessions since the onset of the open crisis in the late 60s, the bourgeoisie relied upon incredible explosions of debt to pull the economy out of the doldrums. During the 1973-75 recession the U.S. budget deficit climbed from \$2 to 8 billion; during the 1981-83 recession, the deficit grew from \$50 to 200 billion — quadrupling each time. Such incredible explosions of credit could hide the effects of recession, but the underlying problem — global overproduction — remained. Today, with the deficit almost \$400 billion and national debt at \$4 trillion, this palliative has run out for the bourgeoisie. Today as the government celebrates recovery, unemployment continues at catastrophic levels, housing starts have declined again, bankruptcies continue at record levels. Massive corporate layoffs announced last fall by GM, which will close 21 plants and fire 74,000 workers, United Technologies, IBM, and many other companies are just now being implemented.

The current manipulation of the economy cannot be sustained, not with the worsening global crisis, shrinking world trade, growing pressures for protectionism, and the staggering national debt and budget deficit. Shortly after the election, if not before, illusion will give way to reality, and the open recession will be undeniable. — Jerry Grevin

Preparing to keep the right in power continued from page 1

Today, precisely at the moment when the worsening economic crisis has weakened the electoral appeal of the Republicans to the point where a left candidate stands a good chance of successfully challenging for the White House, the control of the Democratic Party and the designation of its nominee has been shifted away from the left to the center/right wing of the party. This assures that the matter who wins the election, the left of the Democratic Party can still play an oppositional role and not use up its credibility by being forced to implement austerity policies.

The Democratic Leadership Council, an amalgam of center and right Democrats worked for several years to "reclaim" the Democratic party from the left. Leading candidates of the party's left, like Jesse Jackson, were excluded from its deliberations. This wing of the party coalesced around the candidacy of Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. At the same time, the leading figures of the left wing of the party, Jesse Jackson, Ted Kennedy and Mario Cuomo decided not to run, leaving the race to second or third tier liberal politicians, like Bob Kerrey and Tom Harkin, who dropped out quickly. The only candidate from the left wing of the Democratic party to remain in the race was Jerry Brown, widely regarded as a "flake" and capable of mobilizing only the militant, discontented elements within the party electorate. Meanwhile, Clinton, who has been the subject of character assassination by the bourgeois media and crippled by "character" problems, is a "flawed" candidate who can be easily beaten in November.

If Bush somehow manages to prove unable to win the election, the election of Clinton assures continuity, and still allows the left to play an oppositional role.

The candidacy of billionaire "populist" H. Ross Perot plays a special role in the presidential campaign. On a superficial level, Perot appears to respond to the anti-political sentiment in the population, in a way similar to the marginal parties in European countries. However, his candidacy should not be viewed as a "loose canon" in the political process that might upset the bourgeoisie's goals. Rather it represents a maneuver to help achieve the desired results. If Perot really posed a threat to the bourgeoisie's plans, the bourgeois media would ridicule him and freeze him out, destroying his credibility and ruining his candidacy. This is precisely what was done to Patrick Buchanan in the Republican primaries. Instead Perot's candidacy has been showered with media attention which only fosters his campaign. His campaign is designed to provide a safety valve for Republican and right-center Democrats who might ordinarily be expected to vote for Bush but are too angry about the economy to do so this year. These people can vote against Bush, without voting for Clinton, and putting the Democrats in power by accident.

Whether there are three or two candidates this November, the choice between capitalist politicians, as to who will preside over the austerity attacks and the pursuit of imperialist interests for the next four years, offers nothing for the working class. — Jerry Grevin

Capitalism beefs up the unions

The ruling class is taking advantage of the current reflux in class struggle and class consciousness to beef up the unions. The bourgeoisie is well aware that the deepening economic crisis is pushing workers to return to class struggle to defend their interests. The trade unions are the main tool for controlling working class discontent for capitalism. Because of the way they were used to set workers up for defeat over and over during the 80s, trade union credibility has taken a bit of a beating and the ruling class wants to get maximum effectiveness out of the unions in the upcoming period.

By the late 1980s management threatened to fire and replace strikers in 25 percent of all strikes, and actually did so in 15 percent. While this was a demoralizing blow to workers, it also weakened the credibility of the unions. The Democrats have proposed legislation banning the permanent replacement of strikers, which has passed in the House, in order to avoid situations that too clearly demonstrate that unions don't defend workers' jobs. Even the administration-controlled National Labor Relations Board has begun to rule against the companies, reversing a decade long trend. The reason why the United Auto Workers capitulated at Caterpillar this spring and ordered strikers back to work after management threatened to permanently replace strikers was to prevent another mass firing from further undermining the unions' image.

The Bush Administration's decision to clean up and "democratize" the Teamsters Union, the nation's largest union with 1.2 million members, was also taken to strengthen the labor movement's image.

The favorable media blitz given to the United Steel Workers strike at Ravenswood Aluminum in West Virginia is another example of the attempt to strengthen the unions. This strike received prominent coverage far in excess of its "news value," and was cited as a union "victory," using innovative "corporate campaign" tactics (i.e. petitioning stockholders and asking corporate clients to boycott Ravenswood. These tactics, of course, take workers completely off working class terrain. Instead of spreading the strike to other workers, we are told the best thing to do is to appeal to other members of the bourgeoisie to put pressure on Ravenswood.

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International Disorder and Chaos Grow

Many people alive today can still remember a time when the president of the United States, in the wake of the collapse of the eastern bloc announced the beginning of a "New World Order" under which the various nations of the world would live together in peace and harmony under the beneficent leadership of the one remaining super-power, the USA. And if anyone were to disturb this new-found peace and harmony, the nations of the world, coordinated by the USA would work together to beat the trouble-maker into submission. The Persian Gulf War was the military adventure marking the start of this 'enforceable' New World Order.

Of course, that was a long-time ago and the world situation has changed dramatically...hasn't it? In truth, the Gulf War was only a year and a half ago but alot has happened in the interim. The USSR, having been relieved of its military-economic bloc in 1989 (as its various eastern European satellites deserted), not only declined but imploded in December, 1991. It has fallen into bits and pieces with each former Soviet Republic now an independent state.

The would-be leader of the world, George Bush, has found that the ex-members of the American bloc are not the well-disciplined group he had hoped. Certainly, a major goal of the Persian Gulf War was the US government's intended lesson to the various other nations: 'do not even think of going against the wishes of the world's sole remaining super-power; no country can stand against the US when it is angry.'

But history is now moving at an accelerated pace. The lessons taught by Bush & Co. at the start of 1991 were soon losing their ability to convince other major economic powers of the ex-US bloc, like Germany and France.

The break-up of the ex-USSR was an important event shaking up the 'new world order.' Also, the pressures of international competition in a fundamentally depressed international economy strongly motivated US trade rivals to act in their own interests regardless of US wishes. With the ex-USSR's republics and the ex-USSR's satellites up for grabs, the temptation has been too much for Bush to control.

An Explosion of Imperialist Appetites

Despite the evidence that there is today no military power on the planet which can dare challenge the US in a head-to-head military confrontation, a number of ex-US bloc members have taken significant steps to chart a course toward competitive imperialist constellations. This is an expression of the decomposition affecting capitalism on a world scale.

Capitalist states are by nature both competitive and imperialist. Co-operation occurs when happenstance dictates that the particular interests of certain countries are best served by that co-operation. Hence the US-bloc, which was constituted first and foremost as a military bloc to combat the eastern bloc coalesced around the USSR, fell apart when the USSR's bloc disintegrated—its reason for existence had passed.

More telling than the US's violent demonstration of military might in the Gulf War, in shaping the current international alignments, has been the fierce competitive appetites of ex-US allies like Germany, France and Japan.

At the moment the USSR was falling apart in the wake of the failed coup, it was Germany which rushed in to recognize Ukrainian independence. The US as the world's superpower had sought to hold that union together. With the splintering, the US openly and obviously determined that it must become a close ally of the new Russia, which was the dominant power of that region with substantial military might (especially nuclear forces) and comparatively higher industrial and economic resources.

In a sense, the alignment of the US with Russia pushed the Ukraine to

seek friendship with Germany, the world's number two economic giant and the first ranked economy in Europe.

Similarly, there has been a competition for imperialist influence in the southern tier of Asian ex-soviet republics (which have historic Islamic traditions), notably among Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

In the often bloody conflict between the ex-soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Turkey has sought to support its Islamic neighbors, the Azeris, in order to foster its own imperial designs. To the extent that this puts Turkey at odds with US goals in the region, Turkey is pushed to benefit that other great economic power, the main US competitor, Germany.

Perhaps most striking and portentous is the constellations unfolding in the heart of Europe itself. Already we can see numerous countries sharing German language and/or historic cultural or economic ties, orienting themselves around Germany: Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia. Of particular importance is the trend toward close ties between France and Germany. The US has repeatedly tried to intimidate France, which has a strong economy and a strong military, in hopes of keeping France and Germany from pulling together. Working together, they can have much greater power. Thus far, despite very limited joint military training efforts,

these two European powers have stumbled blindly in their path. France too well remembers two world wars and is reluctant to arm its neighbor which has no nuclear armaments of its own. Elements of the French ruling class, notably a wing of the right, are opposed to the pro-German orientation favoring a more pro-American stance.

Other countries of western Europe, especially Britain and also Holland have hitched their wagons to the American empire.

Japan has been very actively pursuing the expansion of its economic influence in the Far East, from the easternmost reaches of the ex-USSR to China and Indo-China. Recent decisions by the Japanese government, allowing it the option of sending troops overseas (which has been illegal since the end of World War II), ostensibly in support of UN peace-keeping missions and the like, may be a step in the longer term preparation to support the demands of imperial leadership in its corner of the world.

Fanning the Flames of Chaos

This new wave of competition on the imperialist plane, with its push toward new constellations, can only help spur on the social decomposition already underway within the various countries of the world. One need look no further than the ex-Yugoslavia, which has been splintering in a blood-bath for the past year. Intervention by the likes of the US and Germany, each

for its own interests, have only tended to continue and expand the suffering and chaos. Nationalist cliques in other countries, such as Czechoslovakia, may yet lead to the break-up of that state, as one side and the other seek support from imperialist powers. Turmoil in Chad and Algeria has been stirred up as the US has encouraged opposition, intending to give warning to its erstwhile ally, France, which has been the imperialist patron in those countries.

No New World Order under Capitalism

Even with the explosion of competing imperialist appetites, there is still a long distance to travel to the constitution of new military blocs. A division of the world into two great military blocs, as in the days of the 'cold war' may not be in the future of decadent capitalism. There are various roadblocks, including the one-sided military advantage of the US and the convulsions of social decomposition ahead. Up to now the various democracies of western Europe, North America and Japan have the challenge of finding a new ideological framework for defining the enemy for the population at large and, especially, the working class. The potential enemy is not a fascist nor a stalinist bloc—the major powers are today "democratic."

The working class must resist getting pulled into support for the national interests, for 'peace' through military might. The workers have no country. Proletarian internationalism and the communist revolution are the requirements for a true historic alternative for mankind to have a future worth living.

—Eric Fischer

STRIKES IN GERMANY--

Unions push the workers into premature struggles, the better to defeat them

The past couple of years, there has been a relative quiet in the major industrial countries on the level of class struggle. This has been true despite the fact that it has been an intense period of mounting economic attacks on the standard of living of the workers, worsening job conditions, and generally rising unemployment and misery.

This low level of struggle has not meant that workers have bought the capitalist logic and are meekly accepting their fate. Rather, the history making convulsion of international capitalism in the past few years, the collapse of the eastern bloc, the Persian Gulf War, the implosion of the USSR itself and the growing chaos seen as capitalism hurls mankind into a period of increasing social decomposition—have all helped to disorient the working class as it tries to make sense of this new and ugly reality.

The working class was not being defeated. These past few years of growing economic crisis, its continuing aggravation and its harmful impact on the workers in even the most powerful capitalist states is making it more and more likely that the workers will move once again to action in fighting against the attacks. It is precisely to try to position itself to be able to control and contain the workers' struggles that the major capitalist states are trying to beef-up the unions.

This spring there has been an increasing number of struggles orchestrated to strengthen the unions to better position them to sabotage the workers efforts in the coming period. Germany is a strong example of this effort on the part of capitalism. Since 1991 the German workers have suffered economic attack as they are being made to pay to cost of re-unification. These attacks are not over yet.

The government, management and the unions have recently taken to painting a radical image of the unions each time a major contract is coming up. The mass media has played its role in highlighting the wage negoti-

ations to show the unions as the militant defenders of the workers interests.

The union in the metal industry has been at the forefront. This union, IG Metall, made a much publicized demand for a 10% wage rise despite the employers' categorical insistence that nothing more than 5% would be allowed. Strike threats were made. The unions and the media fanned the anger of the workers. A 'compromise' of 6.4% was heralded in the media as a major victory of the militant unions. Management and union had every intention of granting this raise but used the drama to make the unions in Germany generally more credible.

In the public sector similar charades have been organized by the government and the unions. When the government offered a maximum of 4.8% wage increase, the unions could drop their demand to a paltry 5.4% and pretend to be militant in support of the workers' interests. By calling the workers out on strike with this diminished demand, the unions enhanced their militant image. The timing of the wage demands from sector to sector has been set so that the workers across industry lines would not be fighting side by side. Building trades were kept in the wings by the unions until after a settlement of the public sector strike.

Of course, the capitalist media has also lost no chance to foster divisions between the workers of the old East Germany and of the West. Despite the fact that the workers of the eastern region still only get 60% of the wages of the workers of the western part of Germany, the media has tried to make it appear that the small wage increases won by the workers in the west will be responsible for even worse conditions and unemployment in the east.

By trying to paint the unions as the defenders of the workers (when in fact they are the tools of capital) and by stirring up tension and distrust between the eastern and western German workers, the German ruling

class is preparing to keep the workers divided and under control in the struggles ahead. This is a remarkably strong parallel to the efforts of America's capitalist politicians and media to utilize the LA riots this spring to keep US workers divided according to race.

To be able to defend themselves against the attacks of capitalism, workers must see through the maneuvers of the ruling class and especially of its union apparatus. The workers must focus their struggles on their needs as a class and fight against union efforts to contain their fight on a harmless terrain, dividing workers of one industry or region against their fellow workers. —EF

EFICC still unable to grasp reality

Nearly 2-1/2 years after the opening of the Berlin Wall, the EFICC has finally acknowledged that the Eastern Bloc no longer exists. In Internationalist Perspective 21, the EFICC writes: "Russia has no bloc anymore. For the moment, it has stopped being a major player on the world scene, a challenger of U.S. imperialism....The division of the world into two rival blocs...today does not exist."

When the ICC reached these same conclusions in 1989, the EFICC accused us of deviating from Marxism and falling prey to "bourgeois ideology." A serious revolutionary organization would be forced to reevaluate its theoretical and methodological shortcomings. But the EFICC simply excuses its errors with the sentiment that "it hasn't been easy for anyone to assimilate the dramatic changes of the last few years."

The EFICC still has no theoretical explanation for the collapse of stalinism, since it rejects the ICC's theory of decomposition. Nor does it acknowledge the disintegration of the Western bloc cohesion and the imperialist realignments now underway. —JG

In the last issue of *Internationalism*, we reported on a day-long discussion conference with ICC sympathizers and readers, which focused on the theory of capitalist decadence. The discussion of this crucial theoretical question continued after the conference through a series of exchanges of correspondence, excerpts of which are published here. The first exchange deals with the characteristics of war production in decadence, the second with the material bases of decadence, the third with the period of capitalist decomposition. We invite comment from other readers on this debate.

THE NATURE OF WAR PRODUCTION IN DECADENT CAPITALISM

Dear comrades:

I have read your writings on the decadence of capitalism and it seems to me that the economic and -I don't know if it is right to say- philosophic arguments of your position are based on the analysis of the best revolutionaries, such as Marx, Engels and Luxemburg.

Historically each mode of production has had to pass through two phases: ascendancy and decadence. The change from one mode of production to another more progressive one has always taken place in the period of decadence through the violent confrontation between classes.

In addition, I want to add that in the struggle for Communism, for the first time in history, the revolutionary class - the proletariat - does not possess economic power. It is for this reason that the working class has in the development of its consciousness its most important weapon.

There is a good economic basis for arguing that since WW I (more or less) we have been in the period capitalist decadence. The worsening economic situation in every country and particularly the more powerful ones, such as the U.S., proves the analysis of decadence, and only the most naive or interested apologists for capitalism dare to deny this reality.

Regarding the discussion the ICC has had with other groups on this subject, I think the analysis of the other groups lacks coherence. It seems to me that they need to read seriously the revolutionaries of the past and all the statistics that the bourgeoisie publishes daily.

A point which I need to study more is the nature of production during the phase of capitalism's decadence. When you speak of the production of the means of destruction - production oriented to produce war material- it seems to me that you use a moralist argument. I would like the discussion to deepen this point. - AC - Chicago

ICC's Reply

We can't but be in agreement with your general comments:

1) The theory of decadence is an integral part of Marxism;

2) Every mode of production has passed through a period of ascendancy and a period of decadence;

3) The fact that WW I marks the beginning of capitalist decadence.

Where you seem to have problems is with the nature of production during the period of capitalist decadence, and particularly with the meaning of armaments production. You even seem to think that to say that production in this epoch is fundamentally oriented toward the production of the means of destruction is a moralist argument.

In answering, we like first to recall briefly the outlines of the theory of capitalist decadence.

1) As you know, the ICC bases its analysis of capitalist decadence on Rosa Luxemburg's theorization of the role that extra-capitalist markets play in the accumulation of capital. Luxemburg proved that the capitalism as a whole is incapable of providing with-

in itself the outlets for that part of production - which is relatively small, but essential- which contains the surplus value earmarked for the accumulation process, this is to say to the development of production through the creation of new enterprises or the enlargement of old ones.

Because of the congenital incapacity of capital to absorb in its own relations the whole of its production, historically capitalism could only develop by selling part of its commodities in a non-capitalist milieu. At the same time, it also tended to destroy and eliminate those precapitalist social relations.

Marx and Engels, in the Communist Manifesto, already pointed to this contradictory dynamic of capitalism when they said, on the one hand, that "the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." And at the same time, on the other hand, capitalism "compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves," restricting in this way the bases of its accumulation.

At the end of the 19th century, the rapid exhaustion of the extra-capitalist markets gave birth to imperialism. The struggle to the death between the capitalist states for control of the last remnants of the world market had begun.

The outbreak of WW I would show that there were no more "free" markets to be conquered. The historic limit of capitalism had been reached; not in the form of an absolute disappearance of a precapitalist social formation - extra-capitalist markets- but relative to capitalism's capacity of production and needs of expansion. The period of capitalist decadence clearly brought with it a violent explosion of all the contradictions inherent to it, from then on, because of the loss of its "vital space" - the precapitalist social formations that permitted its progressive accumulation process - capitalism has had recourse more and more to the palliative of destruction and the production of the means of destruction. War became the way of life of capitalism.

2) More precisely, on the question of armaments production. To begin with, we have to say that it is not because of "good or evil," or "just or unjust," or any other bourgeois moral dichotomy, that revolutionaries use the concept of "production of the means of destruction." This term has a precise and almost literal meaning which corresponds to the orientation of an essential part of the capitalist economy during decadence: namely, military production - this is to say, the production not of use values (production for consumption in the form of commodities, either as a means of production or individual consumption), but of the means for its destruction through war.

At another level, it is important to recall that in the context of capitalist decadence, armaments production is in the first place a need imposed on each national capital by international imperialist competition. When capitalism is not at war, it is preparing for war. Thus the constant increase of the weight of military production in the whole economy since WW I is a essential manifestation of the infernal cycle of crisis-war-reconstruction, which characterizes the historic dead-end of this system.

Moreover, the armaments economy, because it gives an artificial outlet to production - thus alleviating the difficulties at the level of the market- may be an effective, even if temporary, palliative for the contradictions of capitalism. Two examples: In the mid-30s the recovery of the world economy from the collapse of 1929 was only possible thanks to the rearmaments efforts of countries like Germany, Japan, Russia, etc. In other words, the recovery of world capitalism from the Great Depression was caused exclusively by the war economy, i.e. the production of the means of destruction.

tion. Second example: The economic growth of capitalism after WW II, besides being fed by the destruction and reconstruction of more than a third of the world's productive apparatus, was fueled in great measure by the stimulant of military production. Under the direction of the State, military expenditures have reached levels without precedent in peacetime. The distinction between wartime military production and peacetime military production has almost disappeared in this period.

But also the use of means of destruction itself - the waging of war - has had the same stimulating effect on the economy as did its production, at least for the countries that delivered the armaments. For instance, during WW II, "Canada realized during the war years a growth of production equal to its total growth of production over the previous 25 years; the United States saw its industrial production grow by 50 percent." (The Decadence of Capitalism- ICC pamphlet)

Currently, after decades of acting as a stimulant to the economy, armaments production is now sapping more and more productive capital - thus showing its essential wasteful nature. The collapse of the USSR was in fact due to the exhaustion of the economy by armaments expenditures. However, world military expenditures are doomed to continue growing. As always, what determines military production in the final analysis is not the temporary relief that this kind of production may give to the economy, but imperialist necessities. Therefore, for the immediate future, with the acceleration of imperialist conflicts caused by the new period of decomposition, the "peace dividend" - at the level of the reorientation/diminution of military expenditures - is going to show itself for what it really is: pure myth.

-Eduardo Smith for Internationalism

THE MATERIAL BASES OF CAPITALIST DECADENCE

Dear ICC:

As far as I can see, understanding the concept of decadence has two fundamental, serious, and important consequences: the first is that it places human historical development in its sturdy, concretely material and objective ground; the second is that it shows the origin and necessity for the class struggle, and in so doing, it offers today's proletariat the tools to identify itself as the only social force that can lead humanity out of the capitalist nightmare.

Decadence is the result of the obstacle that the old property relations impose on the free expansion of more productive, hence progressive, relations of production. The property relations that originally favored the cultural, economic and political development of society turn into fetters because of a simple reason: they are relations of exploitation, they are class relations, in which the dominant, exploiting class resists change, and hence opposes a revolutionary overthrow of its establishment.

The theory of decadence explains the dynamic of social development by recognizing that society's productive forces are not governed by the same laws that govern class exploitation: while the former evolve, develop, grow and mature, the latter lags behind and fails to produce a framework of human relations which adequately favor a natural growth of the productivity of labor.

In capitalism's decadence this is particularly clear from the fact that entire factories, almost entire productive sectors are shut down and the means of production abandoned to rot.

However, although a higher means of production and a higher productivity of labor develop in the womb of the existing social order, this fact alone does not constitute a decisive factor for a revolutionary reconstruction of society...A strong antagonism to the exploiting class and a collective consciousness of the necessity for the overthrow of the ruling class must develop. New relations of production

can only develop if a higher means of production and a higher productivity of labor are outgrowing the framework of human relations within which production takes place. This simply means that objective conditions are at the base of any social change...

Because of the very nature of the decadence of capitalism, and because of the material conditions capitalism has created for the constitution of a classless society, the proletariat alone plays a revolutionary role, in that it is the only serious antagonist to the bourgeoisie, and its action aims at expropriating it of the means of production and at emancipating itself through liberating its own labor power, two actions which will contemporaneously release capitalist fetters and free humanity of the nightmare of barbarous exploitation...

The continuation of capitalist decadence without the action of the proletariat will reach an ever increasing in depth extension by triggering a chain-reaction on the very living organisms of capitalist society: one among the terrible effects of prolonged decadence is the abandonment of tools and the means of production as well as of the productive forces, the risk being a decrease in the productivity of labor and the possibility of destroying the very objective conditions for the constitution of a communist society.-T7

ICC Replies:

There are a lot of things that you say that we can agree with; there are other things which require clarification. In some instances, we feel you may have some lack of clarity on marxist terminology and concepts. While there is no recipe to overcome this problem, the serious study of the marxist "classics" of the workers movement is surely a helpful step.

We cannot go over all the questions which need to be clarified in this letter, but we will focus on two basic questions.

1) You say that the "concept of decadence has two fundamental serious and important consequences: the first is that it places human historical development in its sturdy, concretely material and objective ground; the second is that it shows the origin and necessity for the class struggle. We think that here you are really talking about *historical materialism*, the Marxist method. Marxists use this term "to designate that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes of the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society in distinct classes, and in the struggles of these classes against one another." (Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*)

The importance of the discovery of this methodology (thanks to Marx and Engels) has been enormous: a) It made possible the realization of a scientific analysis of human history, laying bare the inner laws which govern society for the first time. b) No less important, it gave the workers' movement a sharp tool for the scientific investigation of the conditions and goals of its struggle against capitalism.

Historical materialism is not applicable only to the decadence of a society. It accounts for both the rising and decline of different modes of production. In other words it is not specific to the period of crisis and convulsions, that "era of social revolution" which constitutes the decadent phase of society.

2) Regarding the roots of decadence, you say that "decadence is the result of the obstacle that the old property relations impose on the free expansion of more productive, hence progressive, relations of production. The property relations that originally favored the cultural, economic and political development of society turn into fetters because of a simple reason: they are relations of exploitation, they are class relations in which the dominant, exploiting class resists change and hence opposes a revolutionary overthrow of its establishment."

Let's be clear on the ultimate cause of the decline of a society. The decadence of a mode of production

continued next page

continued from page 5

appears always at the point at which the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production...from forms of development of these forces, these relations turn into their fetters." (Marx, Preface to A Critique of Political Economy) For instance, during feudalism, at a certain moment, the new productive forces set in motion by the rising bourgeoisie (the division of labor, manufacturing, etc) came in conflict with the relations of production represented by the feudal landlords and guildmasters.

As Marx projected, what happened to other modes of production, has been happening to capitalism since the beginning of this century. At a certain point in its accumulation process, (the way through which capitalism develops), "the development of the social productive power turns into an obstacle to capital, or what is the same, the capitalist relations of production become obstacles to the further development of the productive power of social labor. At this point, capital and wage-labor stand in the same relation to the development of social production and social wealth as did, previously, the guild-system, and slavery. The fetters of capitalist production must now be shed. Contradictions, crises, social convulsions point to the incompatibility of the social productive development with the capitalist relations of production. In the violent destruction of capital, not by external circumstances, but as a condition of its self-preservation, it becomes evident that capitalism's time is done and that it must be replaced by a higher state of social production." (Marx, Grundrisse)

We will not here go over the different interpretations in the workers' movement of the concrete appearance of the decadence of capitalism, but we want to underline that for Marx, as it is clear in the above quotation, the decline of this system comes to the fore, as in other societies, when the productive forces have outgrown the relations of production in which this mode of production is based — capital, wage-labor, nation states. This growing contradiction between productive forces and relations of production is expressed in the accumulation of a mass of unsalable commodities on the one hand, and the accumulation of mass misery on the other hand — the permanent economic crisis of overproduction. Or, in other words, this contradiction is expressed in the growing barbarism into which 20th century capitalism has sunk humanity. This situation calls for the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a society based not on class relations, nations and political oppression, but on production directed toward the satisfaction of human necessities: Communism, the world humanity community. This is the historic mission of the proletariat.

— Eduardo Smith for Internationalism

THE MEANING OF CAPITALIST DECOMPOSITION

Dear Comrades:

The recent Day of Discussion did not get around to this question [Decomposition]. This seems like a good time to make some critical remarks about it. In general, the Discussion was a useful exercise. It seems to me that the positions expressed on the reasons for the economic crisis (including my own) are altogether inadequate, especially when one considers that they were developed prior to the appearance of state capitalism. The Luxemburgist and Leninist-Bukharinist theories are schematic and outdated conceptions — both are curiously resistant to scientific analysis. In any case, what really needs to be studied and discussed in the communist milieu is the mechanics of state capitalism and its effect on the crisis, a study that certainly requires a new model for crisis theory.

On to decomposition. At times the theory is presented as the replacement

of capitalism by a new, regressive social order of generalized barbarism taking place before our eyes, sometimes as a period of accelerating crisis — not a new phenomenon. Worse still, this muddle is offered as an explanation for everything and then some — from 'chaos on the streets of New York' to the war in Yugoslavia. All-inclusive generalities all to often end up not explaining anything at all.

Take the ex-USSR, for example. Has capitalism actually decomposed? ...There are two factors of especial importance underlying the Soviet collapse, both linked to the operation of the law of value in the USSR. The first is the sociological character of the capitalist class — the immobility of the state bureaucracy, lacking any constructive method of disciplining unproductive elements and sectors, a disease of the hierarchical apparatus. The ICC has dealt with this point in its 'Theses' (IR 60). But I think the text failed to grasp the root of the problem: the modified operation of the law of value. In the USSR, vital sectors of the economy could avoid the lash of profitability (at least directly) because of the state planning system. Combined with the incompetence of the Soviet politico-economic boss, it is easy to see the degenerative effect of enterprise-by-enterprise responsibility, rational methods of accounting and calculation, and institutional friction on modernization. A problem analysis, for example, is that the comrades overestimated the flexibility and adaptability of the Stalinist state.

A second, and perhaps more important factor, which the ICC has not noticed, is Stalinist labor management — the 'full employment' that the Trotskyists liked (and like) to crow about. It's not strictly a case of a Stalinist poverty of political and ideological weapons, as IP thinks. Hillel Ticktin has made some apt comments on this question in Critique 23. Essentially, in his view, Stalinist dictatorship requires certain 'concessions' at the point of production to maintain social peace. Among them: absence of mass unemployment, limitations of intensity of work, lax managerial discipline, 'time-wasting' on the job, etc. This situation is prohibitive of the intensification of the extraction of absolute surplus value, sort of chronic labor shortage which the state planning authority could never quite make up for. Furthermore, this kept new production projects. The 'perverted' valorization process on a macroeconomic level is thus quite apparent in the labor market as well. The transition to the real domination of capital in the USSR is not far wrong.

The break-up of the USSR — despite the resulting chaos, and the fact that the dissolution was much more complete than Russian capital would have liked — was a fairly logical decision for Russian capital. It was necessary to cut away the withered branches of the Soviet empire and a most thorough dismantling of exhausted economic structures, stop the useless frittering away of capital in the Soviet 'backwoods' — in short, a further centralization of capital. Additionally, the disappearance of direct colonization of outlying territories won't free them from the grip of the Russian bear.

As we can see, capitalism is still very much alive in the 'new Russia' and periphery. The theory of decomposition reads much like the decomposition of communist theory.

ICC

ICC replies:

We would be the last to say that Rosa Luxemburg, or Lenin has had the final word on the historic crisis of capitalism. But we would point out that the works of these revolutionaries are contributions to the revolutionary activity and consciousness of the proletariat. The revolutionary marxists of that period left behind, in a very real sense, theoretical contributions which constitute acquisitions for the class, historic acquisitions which must not be set aside lightly or to suit any desire today's revolutionaries might feel for a more 'modern' theory.

Rather marxism builds on the

acquisitions made by its class, never fearing to overturn incorrect formulations when this is appropriate; but, also, not lightly 'throwing the baby out with the bath water.'

As you know, the ICC draws heavily on the work of Luxemburg in particular, which we believe provides a fundamentally correct understanding of how and why capitalism entered its historic crisis. She made an important contribution to the understanding of the historic crisis of capitalism — which is a fundamental issue for the proletariat. When has the historic crisis arrived and how do we know it. It is the onset of the historic crisis which marks the moment when the general historic conditions ripen for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. As valiant as the struggle of the Paris Commune was, as important as it was as a source of important lessons for the workers movement and how it must combat the bourgeois state, it occurred prior to the start of capitalism's historic crisis and was thus destined to lose. Since the early part of the twentieth century, certainly by the start of the first world war, capitalism had reached its historic crisis, entering into its period of decay. Now the historic conditions for proletarian revolution had become ripe. The challenge for the proletariat now rests on the political terrain in the area of consciousness, self-organization and realities of the struggle.

Since Luxemburg's time, the historic crisis of capitalism has not for a moment disappeared. The permanent crisis, which marks the historic limit of capitalism, has never been overturned — only masked through the cycle of world war (with its massive slaughter and destruction), reconstruction and open crisis again.

We would only need a new theoretical explanation of the permanent crisis, if the earlier explanations had been proven false. Furthermore, as discussed at the conference, whether the theoretical explanation favored is that of Luxemburg (saturation of the world market) or that of Grossman (declining rate of profit), the political conclusions, the implications for the actions of revolutionaries and the working class remain the same. The reality of the crisis itself places the historic challenge in front of the proletariat.

You are concerned about relying on theoretical understanding of the crisis developed prior to "the appearance of state capitalism."

This would, it is true, be a serious issue if state capitalism were a form adopted by capitalism to continue its ascendancy. If state capitalism were indeed the expression of the transition from the formal domination of capital to the real domination as the IP has claimed, it would be necessary to revisit the question of capitalist decadence in the light of state capitalism.

Furthermore, it would be necessary to revise much more in revolutionary theory than just this. If factory production, which was firmly established in the nineteenth century did not mark the real domination of capital, but the real domination only comes about much later in the twentieth century with the firm implementation of state capitalism, when and how is decadence to be noted? Of course, the IP has not announced, to our knowledge, a change in the historic onset of decadence.

In International Review #56, we published: "For the EHCC, the development of state capitalism is explained by the transition from the formal to the real domination of capital. Now if this were the case, we should be able to see statistically a continuous progression of the state's share in the economy, since this transition took place over a long period, and moreover we should see it begin during the ascendant period. This is clearly not the case at all. The statistics that we have published show a clear break in 1914. During the ascendant phase, the state's share in the economy is small and constant (oscillating around 12%), whereas during decadence, it grows to the point where today it averages about 50% of GNP. This confirms our thesis of the indissoluble link between decadence and the development of

state capitalism, and categorically disproves that of the EHCC."

The ICC insists that state capitalism is the manner in which capitalism continues to survive in decadence. State capitalism is how decadent capitalism organizes the society for war production. The comrades of the third international noted the "state-ization" of the economy. The Manifesto of the Communist International to the Workers of the World, written by Trotsky and issued in 1919 states in part:

"The catastrophe of the imperialist war has completely swept away all the conquests of trade union and parliamentary struggles. For this war itself was just as much a product of the internal tendencies of capitalism as were those economic agreements and parliamentary compromises which the war buried in blood and muck."

"Finance capital, which plunged mankind into the abyss of war, itself underwent a catastrophic change in the course of this war. During the decades preceding the war, free competition, as the regulator of production and distribution, had already been thrust aside in the main fields of economic life by the system of trusts and monopolies; during the course of the war the regulating-directing role was torn from the hands of these economic groups and transferred directly into the hands of military state power. The distribution of raw materials, the utilization of Baku or Rumanian oil, Donbas coal, Ukrainian wheat, the fate of German locomotives, freight cars and automobiles, the rationing of relief for starving Europe — all these fundamental questions of the world's economic life are not being regulated by free competition, nor by associations of national and international trusts and consortiums, but by the direct application of military force for the sake of its continued preservation. If the complete subjection of the state power to the power of finance capital had led mankind into the imperialist slaughter, then through this slaughter finance capital has succeeded in completely militarizing not only the state but also itself, and it is no longer capable of fulfilling its basic economic functions otherwise than by means of blood and iron."

"...The state-ization of economic life, against which capitalist liberalism used to protest so much, has become an accomplished fact. There is no turning back from this fact — it is impossible to return not only to free competition but even to the domination of trusts, syndicates and other economic octopuses."

If state capitalism was how capitalism organized itself for world war, it did relax this statification following the first world war. In the thirties, with the return of the open crisis coming at the end of the period of reconstruction, strong state capitalist measures in the major powers of Europe and North America were put in place again. State capitalism is the form adopted by the capitalist class to control society in such a way as to allow the total mobilization for world war.

At the end of the second world war, capitalism did not significantly retreat from state capitalist measures. Neither did the war economy appreciably disappear. Throughout the reconstruction period, the major powers remained committed to strong military power. Thus state capitalism took on a more permanent appearance. This in no way diminishes the truth that state capitalism is how capitalism organizes itself to survive in decadence. Its survival in decadence has been made possible through a recurring cycle of world war, reconstruction, open crisis and war again.

DECOMPOSITION

Now to the question at hand: is decomposition an "all-inclusive" generality? If so, you would be right to criticize this conception severely. When the ICC speaks of the decomposition of capitalist society, which is under way, we are referring to a process which characterizes the present period. When we have spoken of capitalism's decadence we have re-

continued next page

ferred to the period, starting about the time of the first world war, which has been marked by capitalism's historical process of decay.

Now when we speak of capitalism's decomposition, we are referring to the last phase of the period of capitalist decadence. Capitalist decadence has not ended; capitalism is not yet superseded. Rather the process has entered its most extreme and ultimate phase. The deepening economic crisis has not gone away. It continues and becomes more exaggerated. The deterioration of capitalist society generally takes a more virulent turn, even in the absence of world war.

State capitalism, world war, the infernal cycle (of war, reconstruction, open crisis and war again), the use of the unions as a tool against the workers, the permanent diversion of huge quantities of capital from the productive cycles as they were sterilized in armaments production -- were all aspects of decadent capitalism.

Similarly when we speak of capitalism in the present phase of decomposition, we can note the explosion of chaos within and among the various nation-states, the collapse of social institutions, the inability of capitalism to maintain social order with the traditional mystifications, the explosive growth of lumpenization even in the most powerful capitalist states.

Decomposition was set loose upon the capitalist world precisely because its own historically discovered "solution" to the open crisis, world war, has been blocked by a stalemate between the two great classes. This time the working class was not defeated, not mobilized for world war, as had been the case twice before. Furthermore, the working class has not yet succeeded in putting posing its historic solution to the crisis of capitalism: communist revolution. In the face of the current stalemate, decomposition unfolds.

The end result of decomposition, if not ended by proletarian revolution, will ultimately be something else. When we speak of 'communist revolution or social decomposition', we are referring to the specific historic alternative confronting the working class and all mankind. Previous generations of revolutionaries had referred to the alternative of 'socialism or barbarism' or when world war threatened: 'war or revolution'. The historic contradictions of society have led from primitive communism, through ancient societies and feudalism. The resolution of the historic contradictions between the proletariat and the capitalist class will lead to communism if the proletariat takes conscious, revolutionary action and is successful....But time is not endlessly on the side of the proletariat. Just as an all out nuclear war could have destroyed human society as we know it, the failure of the revolutionary proletariat to emerge victorious will mean the destruction of human society as we know it.

Previous generations of marxists were right to insist on the historic choice of 'socialism or barbarism.' They were right to recognize that capitalism cannot live forever. The specific form of that contradiction which faces us today can be summarized as 'communist revolution or decomposition'.

THE EX-USSR

You are quite right to insist that capitalism still exists in the territories of the ex-USSR. This is also the position of the ICC. The long term failure of the USSR state in its efforts to cheat the law of value, the inflexibility of the bureaucracy inhibited by self-interested nomenclatura, the inefficiency of the productive process and its management of labor--all these contributed to the crisis which caused the break-up of the USSR.

You write: "The break-up of the USSR--despite the resulting chaos, and the fact that the dissolution was much more complete than Russian capital would have like--was a fairly logical decision for Russian capital, in the sense that it was the only available option for addressing its serious economic problems."

Despite your apparent assumption

that there is a chasm between us on the collapse of the USSR, we see much that we agree with. We think that your description of a "fairly logical decision" does not address the wrenching dislocation and political battles which had to go on within the ruling class to allow the re-organization. The likelihood that a re-organization could not be accomplished in orderly fashion was quite obvious. Beyond this, the fractionation of the former USSR and even of Russia itself, compounded by violent conflicts within and between many of the previous soviet republics, was a major risk factor--one which has not been eliminated. Of course, the alternative to the drastic re-organization was also dreadful for the ruling class.

Thus, we situate the collapse of the ex-USSR on the terrain of decomposition not because capitalism has vanished there but because the ruling class, plagued with insoluble problems, forced into bankruptcy as it competed with the far stronger US capitalism on the military terrain, has been forced into a drastic move toward re-organization which will not quickly or easily solve its problems but at each turn exacerbates tensions--the threat of proletarian anger, chaos on the internal market, ex-nomenclatura still trying to maintain power and privilege, growing disintegration and tensions (economic, political and military) among and within the former soviet republics. Despite the "logic" of the "choice" made, neither social order nor prosperity lies ahead for capitalism in the ex-USSR. A characteristic of the decomposition of capitalism is that the bourgeoisie tends to lose control. Stalinism really did depend on its bureaucracy for social, economic and political control. That system is now dissolving, supplanted by an increasingly chaotic situation.

As you might expect (given our earlier comments) we feel the issue of the "real domination of capital" is irrelevant to understanding the turn of events in the ex-USSR in the last couple of years. You can't adequately understand what has been happening in the ex-USSR outside the context of the international situation.

BT for Internationalism

Publications of the ICC
write to the following addresses without mentioning the name:

Accion Proletaria
Apartado Correos 258, Valencia, Spain

Communist Internationalist
POB 25, Nil, Faridabad, 121001, Haryana, India

Internacionalismo
Apartado Postal 20674, San Martin, Caracas 1020A, Venezuela

Internationalism
PO Box 288, New York, NY 10018-0288, USA

Internationalisme
BP 1134 Bruxelles, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

Internationell Revolution
Box 21 106, 100 31 Stockholm, Sweden

Revolucion Mundial (Mexico)
Write to Revolucion Internacional

Revolucion Internationale
RI, BP 581, 75 027 Paris Cedex 01, France

Rivoluzione Internazionale
CP 469, 80100 Napoli, Italy

Weltrevolution
Postfach 410308, 5000 Köln 41, West Germany

Wereldrevolutie
Postbus 11549, 1001 GM Amsterdam, Holland

World Revolution
BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX, GB

Working class terrain...

continued from page 8

have to conclude that the Democratic party was proletarian since most of the members are workers. Cde Girard grants that the Greens are not revolutionary, but reformist. They take the position that capitalism does not have to be destroyed and replaced by socialism, but that it can be reformed, made better, especially in regard to the environment. This is capitalist politics, bourgeois ideology. This is why we say it is not the terrain of the proletariat.

Obviously, the very dangerous degradation of the environment by capitalism is a serious problem for the working class and endangers the future of humanity. Revolutionaries have an important intervention to make to the working class on this question. Girard wants to know what political intervention the ICC thinks can "be carried on in the environmental movement...How does advocating revolutionary socialism among workers who are concerned about the environment constitute 'abandoning Marxism and the working class'?"

The ICC contends that revolutionaries must point out that the problem cannot be solved within capitalist society, and that those who tell workers that it is possible to reform capitalism so that it no longer rapes the environment are counter-revolutionaries who function to derail workers from the only path that offers hope to humanity. Revolutionaries must insist that a proletarian revolution, reorganizing production based on the fulfillment of social need, and not the drive for profits, is the precondition for addressing the problem of the environment -- as well as myriad other social ills -- in a definitive way. Revolutionaries must make these points in their press, in their public meetings, in their leaflets. They can distribute their leaflets and make oral interventions at the meetings bourgeois environmental groups -- to criticize and denounce their attempts to mislead workers. But

if they enter those organizations, become members of them, they let themselves be used by the bourgeoisie to legitimize these counter-revolutionary organizations. Instead of urging workers to break free of these capitalist organizations, they help bring workers under their influence. This is why we so strongly warned DB against the path they had chosen.

Girard asks, "Just what does internationalism mean by 'the terrain of the proletariat'?" "Is the 'terrain' ... limited to matters involving work and the workplace?" When the ICC speaks of the working class terrain, we mean that the working class must fight and organize itself independently of other classes. In decadent capitalism it is fruitless to see a dichotomy between economic and political issues facing the working class. The nature of state capitalism, which is a universal tendency in all nations, means that all struggles of the working class today inevitably pose the question of a confrontation with the state, which means what begins as an economic struggle quickly becomes a political struggle. Likewise, the so-called "political" issues the proletariat faces, whether its housing, the environment, or abortion, cannot be considered apart from the class struggle to destroy the capitalist economic and political system. The bourgeoisie often uses the legitimate anger that working people, and other strata, feel on these questions as a means to organize partial struggles -- classless, social protest movements. These movements are used to drag the working class away from its own autonomous organization, and drown it in the "people," to spread the delusion that social problems can be resolved within capitalism. This is precisely what the environmental movement is being used for today.

We believe that DB is making a serious political error by entering the Greens, a mistake that will lead it into the arms of capitalism.

~ Internationalism

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In *Internationalism* #76 we criticized the decision by the Discussion Bulletin to enter the Left Green Network. DB's Frank Girard has responded to our criticisms in an Open Letter to Internationalism. Because of space limitations we can publish only key excerpts from Girard's text and our response. Readers may obtain the full text by contacting Discussion Bulletin at POB 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

This is in response to your "Open Letter to the Discussion Bulletin
in Internationalism No. 76.

Before discussing the concerns you expressed, I should point out that the Discussion Bulletin (DB) is not an organization, nor is it the publication of a group. Rather it is an independent forum for libertarian socialists of all varieties. It has no political positions of its own. When I write in the DB, I am expressing my own views, not those of the DB or of anyone else. The same holds true for other people who use the DB.

What Internationalism's "Open Letter" refers to, then, is *my personal* opinions about how libertarian socialists can best reach the working class with the essential message. Here there may be a conflict between my views and those of the ICC. To me the essential message is that the cause of social problems and the cause of about 90% of the state and establishing socialism is the revolution. Is this Marxist, is it socialist, is it DeLeonist? If it isn't, I hope Internationalism and perhaps the "Open Letter" will get back to the DB on the subject. That is why this forum exists.

What concerns Internationalism is my view about how best to get the message across to our class. Internationalism implies that the Greens and the Left Greens are not members of the working class and consequently that joining the Left Green Network and agitating for socialism among people who are concerned about ecology is "a move away from the terrain of the proletariat."

But I have some questions about this charge. First of all, just what does Internationalism mean by the proletariat? I have always accepted the Marxist view that in a capitalist society there were two classes: the owners of capital who lived on the labor of other people, and the proletariat, who own no capital and must rent themselves out as wage or salaried workers to the capitalist class of owners. After some years in the local Greens, I have not met a single capitalist who was a member. All our proletarians by the Marxist definition although, like nearly all the Greens, we have not met in my years as a factory worker and an education industry worker, most of them identify their interests with those of their exploiters.

Next, just what does Internationalism mean by "the terrain of the proletariat"? Is the "terrain" in this instance limited to matters involving work and the workplace? Does it mean that we can agitate among our class only on issues relating to wages and the other conditions of our enslavement?

On another note, am responsible for what appears in the DB and am open to criticism in that regard. But by and large the content consists of letters and articles that readers send expressing their political or other opinions or comments. I do not select articles (and sometimes other readers) chosen for articles and leaflets which I call "political sector." Here of course I do exercise an editorial function. I am responsible for the decision not to publish the large number of leaflets that have been sent in by various groups produced. My reason was that they all presented essentially the same analysis of the causes, with differences visible only to practiced eyes.

This letter shouldn't close without some final questions for Internationalism. 1) How does Internationalism "actively intervene" in working class struggles in ways that libertarian socialists including DeLeonists do not? 2) What does Internationalism regard as "political struggle" that can't be based on in the environmental movement? 3) How does advocating revolutionary socialism among workers who are concerned about the environment constitute "abandoning Marxism and the working class?"

Frank Girard

We wish to acknowledge the seriousness with which comrade Girard has responded to our criticisms of the Discussion Bulletin. His letter raises some important questions that deserve answers. These include the class make-up of some of the participants in the working class struggle, the revolutionary intervention in the class struggle.

However, before replying to these

tendency in the proletarian milieu in the U.S. The publication is not called, "Frank Girard's Personal Opinions." Indeed, on the front page of each issue is published the "Editorial" of the *Discussion Bulletin Committee*. The time DB publishes a financial statement is signed, "Frank Girard for the DB Committee." Whether this committee has one member or hundred, it has a political existence in the milieu. It defends the political position of the socialist—tinged with a DeLeonist influence), uses political criteria for determining which articles, correspondence, and issues to focus debate on, and has a considerable readership, which is influenced by what positions it defends.

Regarding the decision not to publish the leaflets of milieu groups on the Gulf War, Cde. Girard says defensively, "they all presented essentially the same analysis...with different words, but they all practiced hairsplitting." The cde forgot the fact that he made a political decision not to publish an ICC critique of the DB's leaflet on the war, which raised important theoretical questions about the motives of the internationalists in the Gulf in relation to the new period of capitalist decomposition. Anti-theoretical biases which dismiss the war trying to understand the forces in the society today with "hairsplitting" have been a part of marxism. In addition, the fact that DB never published any articles assessing the collapse of stalinism demonstrates a failure to understand the need to address the central questions of the current period.

Now, let us turn to the more serious issues.

Cde Girard writes "To me the essential message is that capitalism is the root cause of social problems and that the solution is the revolutionary act of abolishing capitalism and the state and establishing socialism. Is this Marxist, is it socialist, is it DeLeonist?" We essentially agree with these sentiments. However, it is not Marxism (though it may be DeLeonism) to imply that the abolition of capitalism and the state can be achieved in a single

to be achieved in a single revolutionary act. The workers must destroy the capitalist state and seize power over society as a precondition for the transition to communism to begin. This transition will not be achieved overnight. It will take years of conscious effort by the proletariat to stamp out the vestiges of bourgeois ideology, the continued impact of the law of value, and to assure the disappearance of the transitional state. Readers are referred to the ICC pamphlet on the Period of Transition to Communism. (price \$2)

The real disagreement we have with

DB is on how revolutionaries work to help bring about this revolution. Girard thinks he can accomplish this by working within the Greens, which he acknowledges is not a revolutionary group. He challenges Internationalism, which the Greens are a capitalist movement and that entering the Greens is "a move away from the terrain of the proletariat." Girard writes, "I have always accepted the Marxist view that in a capitalist society there were two classes: the owners of capital and the laborers. The first group, the owners, are the capitalists and the others are the proletariat. The capitalists do not work, they own the capital and must rent themselves out as wage or salaried workers to the capitalist class of owners." He then goes on to argue that he has met no capitalists in the Greens, though he acknowledges that some of them do identify their interests with those of their exploiters."

Here Girard reveals a rather simplistic understanding of the classes in capitalist society, one that many people coming from DeLeonism tend to share. It is a gross simplification to think that the petty bourgeoisie is a capitalist society. While it is true that Marx tended to formulate his mode of the operation of capitalist laws by focusing only on the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, he and Engels were not blind to the existence of the petty bourgeoisie or middle class – small producers, artisans, independent professionals, supervisory personal, government bureaucrats, etc.). Indeed, in the theories of Surplus Value Marx identified the existence of the petty bourgeoisie as a significant part of capitalist development. Luxemburg's analysis of the accumulation of capital stressed the importance of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry as markets for the surplus value produced in the period of ascendant capitalist development. The petty bourgeoisie continues to exist today – and so does the peasantry. Indeed one of the central disputes between the U.S. and Europe over the last several decades has been the continued insistence of the European bourgeoisie to subsidize the existence of the peasantry in Europe. On a global level, the proletariat is in fact a minority, its size dwarfed by the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry in the so-called "developed" countries. The simplistic view expressed by Girard, leads DeLeonists to often conclude that bank presidents and CEOs of major corporations are actually working class since they are on a salary. It's a view that leads nowhere.

The social base of political movements like the Greens is not the working class, but the petty bourgeoisie, drawing its membership primarily from professionals, academics, artists, students etc. In any case the real issue is not sociology, but politics. What determines the class nature of a political organization – whether it is proletarian or bourgeois – is not the sociological origin of its members but the political positions it defends. If sociology were determinant we would

continued on page 7

...but depth and ...

Internationalism is the section in the U.S. of the International Communist Current which defends the following political positions:

nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

* All the nationalist ideologies - 'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination' etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.

* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. 'Democracy', a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties (now ex-'Communists'), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' and 'united fronts', which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

* In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social struggle with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organized mass action by the proletariat.

* The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

* The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean 'self-management' or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

the working class' nor to 'take power' in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat's combat.

Our activity

Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.

Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.

The development of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

Our origins

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and the political positions of these organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League of Marx and Engels* (1847-52), the *First International* (the *International Workingmen's Association*, 1864-72), the *Second International*, 1884-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-26), the last fractions which determined themselves from the generating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the *German, Dutch and Italian* etc.

Internationalism

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Humanitarianism Is the New Cover for Militarism

As the world sinks more and more into chaos and suffering and misery grow, military intervention, usually led and organized by American imperialism, becomes more frequent. As the only remaining superpower in the world, U.S. imperialism is obligated to try to staunch the slide into chaos and to prevent any rival imperialism from challenging it. American troops are being dispatched to every corner of the globe these days -- from Los Angeles to Yugoslavia to Iraq to Somalia. The ruling class used to use the ideology of anti-communism to justify its military excursions. But that propaganda line is no longer relevant. The new buzz word is "humanitarianism." Of course this is all bunk. Capitalism's only concern about humanity is to find ways to exploit and control it.

All the media attention directed at the suffering in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and southern Iraq is just being used as cover for America's imperialist aims in these far-reaching corners of the globe, and, moreover, as part of their global chess game against German, French and other imperialisms. It is capitalism, and its imperialist antagonisms that are the underlying causes of the horrible events around the world that have characterized the birth of the much vaunted "new world order." When capitalist politicians talk of "humanitarianism" today, they prepare for military intervention. INTERNATIONALISM, September 23, 1992

The electoral circus --

THE MYTH OF CAPITALIST 'DEMOCRACY' IS A LIE

The 1992 election campaign is entering its final weeks now, and the media barrage is in full swing. However, despite all the democratic propaganda in the capitalist media, this is not a "free election" where the outcome is up for grabs. Under decadent capitalism, elections are no longer the means by which the ruling class makes decisions. Rather, they have become a political tool used by the ruling class to mystify the population and to manipulate the political process to achieve its aims. The bourgeoisie does not leave such a crucial decision as who will constitute its governing team up to blind chance or to "the will of the people." Too much is at stake.

THE POLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE BOURGEOISIE

The bourgeoisie has a political strategy and the means to carry out that strategy in order to best protect its domination of society. The capitalist class is still committed to the same global strategy it has utilized since Thatcher came to power in Britain. In 1978, the strategy of the left in opposition. This ruling class division of labor relies on the right to implement austerity and to attack the working class standard of living directly. At the

same time, the left plays its role by controlling and subverting attempts by the working class to defend itself against these attacks. Precisely because the economic crisis is accelerating and will inevitably provoke a renewal of working class resistance, it is particularly advantageous for the bourgeoisie to keep its left forces in opposition.

As the strongest and most politically sophisticated capitalist power in the world, American capitalism is an experienced manipulator of the "democratic process," extremely adept at carrying out its strategies and ramming its will down the throat of the population. Its use of the mass media to hoodwink, confuse and manipulate is unsurpassed.

THE RECESSION CREATES POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES

The deepening economic crisis has made it very difficult for the ruling class to assure its desired result in the upcoming presidential election: the reelection of George Bush. As pointed out in Internationalism No. 78, "this is a difficult political goal to achieve under the current conditions of decomposition and open recession....(T)he seriousness of the economic crisis and

worsening standard of living has created a politically unfavorable climate for the re-election of President Bush." The Bush administration's effort to give at least the impression that the economy is improving has fallen flat on its face. This of course is not Bush's fault, but a reflection of the depths of the economic crisis. The palliatives used during previous presidential campaigns in recessionary periods to revitalize the economy, including, especially, the lowering of interest rates, are no longer effective. Interest rates are now at a thirty-year low but this has barely had any positive impact on the economy.

THE DEMOCRATS MOVE RIGHT

However, despite these difficulties, the ruling class is far from powerless and has acted to assure that the left will remain in opposition. The control of the Democratic party has been transferred from the left of the party to right-center. Despite promising to expand social programs, which echoes the traditional left program of the Democratic party, Bill Clinton's policies, domestic and foreign, are not very different from Bush's. The move to the right was exemplified by the sudden change in posture of the Democrats, who now openly declare themselves to be pro-business and speak of the need for investment, rather than "social spending." The party also moved to the right on law and order, endorsing the death penalty for the first time in more than a generation. This guaranteeing of the status quo is

continued on p.3

INTERNATIONAL RECESSION--

This Slump Doesn't Go Away

For more than two years, the leaders of one major country after another has been announcing that the economy would improve, yet the global downturn does not go away. In fact, it continues to deepen. The currency crisis which has shaken the countries of Europe is evidence that the economic crisis is accelerating at a dangerous pace. The inability to reach an international understanding on what to do about interest rates in Europe on the very eve of so-called 'economic union' illustrates the impact of decomposition on the international level. Germany, driven by its own needs to attract capital to finance reconstruction, has turned a deaf ear to the needs of more depressed economies, like Britain. It is truly each for himself in this period of capitalist decomposition. All this means that the crisis will soon reach new depths and that the attacks on the working class in Europe and elsewhere around the world will in turn reach

unprecedented levels of brutality.

Workers in the US have been told that the recession is a specifically American problem, a result of mistakes by the Bush Administration, Congress or the Federal Reserve Board. This recession is no mistake. And it is particularly American. It is a profound international economic crisis.

In the euphemistic words of France's ex-Prime Minister Barre, "The whole world economy is in the process of purging itself after its year of excess." Among the 24 major industrial countries of the ex-western bloc, unemployment shot up to 10 million during 1991 and there is no sign of turning around yet. Britain, which has been reeling under the weight of open recession for more than 10 years. In Germany, the European dynamo, the burdened with massive costs of reunification, the slump was in the open for all to see by the end of 1991. For two years, Japan, the industrial economic giant in the Far East, has suffered declining growth rates and is

now entering open recession. The ex-Eastern bloc countries, including Russia itself, faster in worsening economic bankruptcy. The so-called 'developing' nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America have, for the most part, never rebounded from the decline of the 1980s.

By the end of the sixties, when the period of economic reconstruction which followed the unprecedented destruction of World War II ended, the crisis of overproduction, which faced global capitalism before the world war, resurfaced. A series of maneuvers were implemented by the major capitalist powers to push the crisis into the background. In the seventies, massive credit was extended to the 'third world' to create demand for capital goods and other products made in the metropolises in order to keep the global economy going. This could only

continued on p.2

CONTENTS NO.79

Currency Crisis	p.2
No! to Elections	p.3
Columbus	p.4
Yugoslavia	p.4
Somalia	p.4
Italian Left	p.5
Hurricane Andrew	p.6
Polemics:	
Ideas & Action	p.6
EFICC	p.6
Machiavellianism	p.7
NAFTA	p.8

2 Behind the Currency Crisis-- The Crisis of World Capitalism

The crisis which rocked the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in September, leading to the devaluation of the Italian Lira, the Spanish Peseta, and the British pound, and to the indefinite exclusion of the latter from the ERM, tore aside the myth of European economic unity, and revealed the violent antagonisms which lie at the heart of the capitalist world.

The circumstantial reasons for this crisis are now well known, in particular those concerning the cutting of the value of the Pound Sterling by some 13% - that is, a sizeable portion of its purchasing power on the world market. The German economy, plagued by the costs of the unification, and eager to pay for its budgetary deficits by attracting foreign capital, has maintained high interest rates, which in turn has kept the value of the Deutschmark high, particularly in relation to the American Dollar, whose value has dropped as US interest rates have been cut in a vain effort to lift the American economy out of recession. The resulting tension in the international monetary system has made the weaker industrial countries of Europe, like Britain, the victims of the recent exchange rate crisis.

The British media has not been slow in describing how the German Bundesbank gave the signal for currency speculators to sell £s for DMs, and thus push the £ below its 'floor' in the ERM in spite of the intervention on the foreign exchange markets by the Bank of England and the raising of interest rates momentarily to 15%. The German government has thus been blamed for the fall of the £, as a result of this unsupporting behaviour. As though the relations between capitalist nations were not governed by the law of the jungle, and as though the British bourgeoisie itself wasn't an expert in applying these laws!

The more the economic crisis deepens, the more the world market becomes saturated, the more the war of each against all predominates. And this war is increasingly a determining factor in the accentuation of imperialist rivalries, resulting in bloodbaths throughout the world.

The victors in the economic war, or rather those who lose least, are the nations which can sell cheapest on the world market. It's this in the end which determines the strength of one currency against the other.

The fall of the Pound Sterling
The competitive position of the British economy has declined disastrously since the 2nd World War. In 1950 it had a 25% share in the world market. By the 1990s this share had dwindled to some 6%. Today, the purchasing power of the Pound is only a tenth of what it was in 1964. As a result of particular factors, such as high military spending (a fundamental drain on economic wealth, a sterilisation of capital) and a lack of investment in the technological infrastructure of the economy, Britain has, out of the main industrialised countries, been poorly equipped to deal with the crisis in the world economy which has been unfolding since 1968. It is thus one of the hardest hit by the recession which has developed since 1990 throughout the world.

The devaluation of the £ in September 1992 is thus a reflection of a cumulative weakness of the British economy as it battles for a place in a shrinking world market.

The seriousness of this event is comparable to the last time the Pound Sterling was devalued by a British prime minister, Harold Wilson, as head of a Labour Government, in 1967. At that time the fall in the value of the £ - by 14.3% - also mirrored international difficulties. It signalled the very re-emergence of the world

economic crisis after the reconstruction period which followed World War II.

But today the predicament of the British economy is far worse, as the world, and the countries of the ex-eastern bloc have sunk into a decline which has now become catastrophic (witness the danger of hyperinflation in Russia). The recovery of the eighties was reserved essentially for the industrialised countries of the 1st world, and was only achieved thanks to a fantastic explosion of debt in this region, a development closely linked to a phenomenal increase in military spending.

During the 70s the underdeveloped countries absorbed some \$1000 billion of credit as a means of buying the products spewed out by the industrialised countries, and this gave a false extension to a saturated world market. The limits of this policy were reached by the time of the recession of 1981-82 when a whole series of the debtor countries were no longer capable of repaying the loans and were threatened directly with bankruptcy.

In the 80s the policy of massive indebtedness was applied by the industrialised countries, and particularly the US, to their own economies. Thus today the American economy is groaning under the weight of an internal debt of \$10,481 billion, *If depreciating the currency solved anything, Britain would already have been one of the most successful economies in the world. In 1966 the pound was worth more than DM11. But the devaluations of the past yielded not booming exports but rather a steadily falling share of world markets ... outside the ERM, we would still have to compete with the ERM countries ... and our initial gain in competitiveness would soon be eroded as imports soared ... That would do British industry no good at all. ... It would certainly be the end of the battle with inflation - we would have surrendered. And quite soon interest rates would have to go back up again - to much higher levels than they are today*" (quoted in the Financial Times September 24 1992).

In reality the British bourgeoisie raises its head in the face of the drastic reduction of the prices of its goods on the world market, not through devaluation, but through a reduction in the costs of production, that is through further draconian attacks on the cost of labour power, on the living standards of the working class.

But if this bourgeois could understand, at least temporarily, that devaluation wasn't a solution to the problems of the British economy, he didn't see that it was also the result rather than the cause of these problems. The cause lies in the long term decline of the British economy. And this decline is only one expression of the impasse of the entire world economy.

The decline of the world economy if Britain, along with Spain, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Ireland etc has been an obvious casualty of the exchange rate crisis, it by no means follows that those European countries whose currencies have so far survived - Germany, France, the Benelux countries - are not also victims of the impasse of world capitalism. The exchange rate crisis is an indication that the financial tissues of the capitalist mode of production are weakening as a result of the exacerbation of the latter's fundamental contradictions.

The fact that the US dollar has fallen to its lowest level against the Deutschmark since the latter was first minted in 1945 is a result of two fundamental factors.

Firstly, a discordance of economic policy between these two main industrialised nations as a result of the dissolution of the western bloc after the collapse of the eastern bloc three years ago. Once the threat from the East had disappeared, the USA's ability to impose its own economic discipline on its former allies was fundamentally weakened.

Secondly, and most importantly, because of the attempt of the US bourgeoisie to stimulate the American economy out of recession, and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of doing so when the mechanisms of credit expansion have essentially been exhausted.

The present recession throughout the world economy is the fifth since the reemergence of the permanent crisis of capitalism at the end of the sixties: the recessions of 1967, 1970-71, 1974-75, 1981-82 preceded it. However the return to growth in the world economy during the 80s did not reach all the parts of the system. Both the third world, and the countries of the ex-eastern bloc have sunk into a decline which has now become catastrophic (witness the danger of hyperinflation in Russia). The recovery of the eighties was reserved essentially for the industrialised countries of the 1st world, and was only achieved thanks to a fantastic explosion of debt in this region, a development closely linked to a phenomenal increase in military spending.

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In the 80s the policy of massive indebtedness was applied by the industrialised countries, and particularly the US, to their own economies. Thus today the American economy is groaning under the weight of an internal debt of \$10,481 billion,

and an external debt of \$800 billion. The US, which accounts for some 40% of world production, faces, like the third world, the threat of insolvency. The recession which has been unfolding since 1990 has therefore a qualitative difference with those which preceded it. The system is approaching the limits of the possibility of relaunching economic growth by means of debt. Thus even with the reduction of interest rates in the US to 3% only the most anemic growth in US production has been achieved: a 1.4% yearly rate measured in the second quarter of this year.

With fundamentally no way out for the world economy - both Japan and Germany, the other two economic giants, also face zero growth - the bourgeoisie can attempt to restrict the damage. But even this policy has limits, since the reinforcing of the tottering banking system by the state treasury in the United States for example has only temporarily postponed the implosion of capitalism's financial structures.

More and more the inherent anarchy of capitalism, which cannot overcome its structure of competing nation states, rears its ugly head. Each capitalist nation tries to save itself at the expense of its rivals, the stronger pushing the crisis onto the weaker. The commercial war between countries and groups of countries is already

continued on p.5

The slump that won't go away continued from p.1

be a temporary fix because countries like Mexico, Brazil and the other economic 'miracles' would ultimately need to find markets to sell the goods they were now able to produce in order to pay back the loans. Massive defaults and bankruptcies, witnessed as the blossoms faded on these economic 'miracles', marked the exhaustion of this maneuver. Banks in the US and western Europe felt the sting of massive debts that would never be repaid.

Much of the eighties were marked by hidden recession. At that time the US economy took on enormous debt to fuel the international economy. At the time, the ICC described this 'recovery' as a vampire recovery. By setting high interest rates, the US drew in vast amounts of foreign capital to finance expanded production. The explosion of debt while siphoning capital from other parts of the globe, could only weaken the US economy for the future. No other country could step in to repeat the US maneuvers of the Reagan years because no other country has the economic weight.

Stories in the press following the collapse of the ex-eastern bloc and the break-up of the USSR spoke of the beginning of a prosperous new period of growth, with all the reconstruction needed in those countries. Such stories were based on wishful thinking or outright lies. Those countries were bankrupt and collapsing in profound economic crisis. While the need for reconstruction and food exists, these countries do not have the capital to pay for it any more than the 'third world' countries which are descending into chaos. Given the profound economic problems manifest in the major powers themselves, massive loans on the scale required to 're-build' Eastern Europe, will not be forthcoming.

This global economic slump is the context for the US recession. It is not a pretty picture for capitalism globally. The US is both the most powerful economy and one which has already paid a severe price for trying to keep afloat the international economy in the eighties. The traditional remedies exercised by the American government since the thirties have drawn heavily on the Keynesian approach. Even Reagan with his 'supply side economics' never really broke with Keynesian economics in substance. Keynes' approach to manipulating the economy heavily relies on monetary and fiscal measures to stimulate 'recovery'. Fiscal measures (like deficit

spending and tax cuts) and monetary measures (expansion of the money supply and cutting interest rates) are Keynesian policies going back to Franklin Roosevelt's era. So-called 'Reaganomics' policies sought to put more money in the hands of the corporations and the wealthy to encourage investment and involved massive deficit spending. The ideological coloration may have been different from previous administrations but the substance remained essentially the same.

George Bush knows the ropes. He's not stupid. He wants to get re-elected, but has failed to put the recession to rest. His problem is linked to the exhaustion of Keynesian maneuvers over a period of two decades, since the open crisis resurfaced at the end of the sixties. The profundity of this slump exceeds anything seen in the US since the last World War. Despite the rhetorical commitment to a balanced budget, the Bush years have pushed the federal budget to all time highs. Deficit spending, if it could 'prime the pump' of the economy, should have worked. Massive growth in deficit spending, under current conditions, could undermine international confidence in the dollar, setting off high inflation. After thirty consecutive interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve Board in a two year period, the Administration has failed to convince the business community and the electorate that the recession has ended.

Today the crisis of overproduction has grown to such proportion that major manufacturers no longer announce seasonal or temporary lay-offs but permanent 'restructuring', shrinking the workforce for the long haul. The banks have gotten into such precarious positions as a result of the credit explosion of the eighties, bankruptcies and the underlying weakness of the economy that they have not been anxious to extend massive credit to businesses and consumers at new, lower rates. Credit is not expanding fast enough to turn the economy around to make Bush look like an economic hero providing 'jobs, jobs, jobs' in time for the election. If the US economy does manage to temporarily escape open recession again, it will be due to its vast industrial and market strength. But if this actually happens, it will be short-lived at best. The prognosis for the future is for the economic situation to continue to worsen. -Eric Fischer

The myth of capitalist 'democracy'

continued from page 1

antees that even if Bush loses, the left, as personified by the traditional left of the Democratic party, will not be encumbered by being in power and thereby being forced to implement attacks against the workers. This is the most crucial element in the capitalist political strategy. It means that the left of the Democratic party will be able to play their classical role of pretending to oppose the attacks on the workers even if the rightwing of their own power manages to stumble into power. In their speeches to the Democratic convention in July, Jesse Jackson, Ted Kennedy and Jerry Brown, while offering ritualistic pledges of party unity, clearly staked out the left in opposition role that they will play if Clinton wins. These leaders of the Democratic party's left wing reaffirmed the traditional left program and oriented themselves towards the un-

ions and minority and women's groups.

THE ROLE OF H. ROSS PEROT

The aborted presidential campaign of billionaire H. Ross Perot, regardless of the individual motives that led him to enter the race, was also used to assure that the left will remain in opposition. Perot served as a poll of attraction for the so-called "Reagan Democrats" who were disenchanted with Bush because of the economy. This kept them from returning to the Democratic fold and giving majority support to the Democratic party. If he had remained in the race, Perot would have facilitated Bush's victory by making it easier for the President to win a state's electoral votes without having to get a majority of the popular vote. The opposition to Bush would have been divided between two camps: Clinton and Perot... By remaining in the race as long as he did, Perot exerted pressure on the Democrats to 'complete' their move to the right. He announced his decision to withdraw only after the consolidation of the center-right triumph at the Democratic convention... In any case, even though he is no longer an active candidate, his name will be on the ballot in all 50 states and will undoubtedly attract the protest votes of voters disgusted with both Clinton and Bush. And at the time of this writing, it is too early to rule out the possibility that Perot might reactivate his candidacy to help Bush get re-elected.

THE REPUBLICAN STRATEGY

The capitalist media tried to portray the Republican convention as one of disarray, bickering and division. This was done to obscure the real manipulations that were taking place and to augment Bush's underdog, Harry Truman-style, comeback from behind campaign ploy. What the media portrayed as division was actually a shrewd and successful attempt to bring disparate elements within the Republican party together. The far right of the party centered around Patrick Buchanan and religious fanatic Pat Robertson, was allowed to impose its stamp on the platform and mollify the

Christian fundamentalists who provided the Republican mass electoral base during the Reagan years.

As during the Reagan years, there is no real intention of implementing the crackpot social agenda of this wing of the party. Vice President Dan Quayle, himself the darling of the Republican rightwing, pointed out that the platform means nothing and said that he wouldn't even bother to read it. To further bolster the right's support, Buchanan was permitted to deliver his rabid, rightwing speech on the first night of the convention. While more moderate members of the party distanced themselves from his remarks, First Lady Barbara Bush was present for the speech and applauded it repeatedly as expression of official unity.

Other speeches at the convention, including those by Barbara Bush, HUD Secretary Jack Kemp and President Bush himself were clearly more moderate in tone. Indeed, despite the right's fixation on abortion, Bush's acceptance speech made only one oblique reference to abortion, and Barbara Bush had already made it clear that she thinks abortion is a private question and shouldn't be in the platform. Even Quayle publicly disassociated himself from the platform's explicit rejection of abortion under any circumstance. All this is a bid for support from the center of the political spectrum.

Meanwhile, while the economic news continues to be unfavorable, the White House has made careful and selective use of the power of incumbency to announce defense contracts and agricultural subsidies which aid specific localities in crucial swing states. Of course, it does this at the same time that it derides "pork barrel" legislation emanating from Congress.

'TRUST': THE REPUBLICANS' BIG GAMBIT

From the beginning, the Republicans made it clear that they hoped Clinton would get the Democratic nomination because his "character problems" made him a flawed candidate. This is the issue they will exploit in the final weeks of the campaign. The British elections in April demonstrated how

the question of "trust" could be manipulated to assure the desired electoral outcome. The unpopularity of the Conservative party was clear — and largely caused by the same horrid economic conditions that have plagued Bush in the U.S. Even at the last moment, public opinion polls predicted a Labor victory. But a last minute media barrage, warning that the cleaned up, moderate image of Labor was not to be trusted, helped deliver a narrow Conservative victory.

The U.S. ruling class is very much aware of how powerful this tactic can be and is even more resourceful than its British colleagues. Wall Street Journal correspondent Al Hunt made it clear in a television panel discussion when he said, "the Republicans best hope is not 1948 or '68 or '88. It's the British election of last year, where there were the Brits who desperately wanted change, and in the end they decided they couldn't quite trust Labor and Neil Kinnock. That's what Republicans hope will happen with Clinton." The relentless media attack on Clinton's character, focused on his draft record, his evasive answers and his "slick" image is a crucial element in this "trust" gambit.

It is still possible that the Bush candidacy may be unable to surmount the political difficulties posed by the economic crisis. However, a few things are clear:

- the re-election of George Bush most clearly coincides with the political needs of American capitalism;
- the bourgeoisie has already guaranteed the basic elements of its political strategy: keeping the left in opposition, even if George Bush loses.
- the media is being used to undercut the Clinton campaign and help Bush win the election.

- nothing in this vast electoral charade offers anything for the working class, except the dubious 'privilege' of being used to give a 'democratic' seal of approval on the capitalist politician who will preside over capitalism's attacks on the working class in the coming years.

— Jerry Grevin, Sept. 17, 1992

NO! TO ELECTIONS YES! TO CLASS STRUGGLE

As the election draws near, we are bombarded daily with the blaring propaganda of the democratic myth of capitalism. The message drones on and on. The real candidates, we are told, offer us a fundamental choice for the future. The future of the nation, the future of the world, will be determined in the voting booth. You are wrong to be cynical or apathetic about the election. You get the government you deserve. It is your civic responsibility to vote on Election Day. Even if you don't like the candidates, there are other reasons to vote. Send a message on the economy. Send a message on the threat to outlaw abortion. TV and movies stars speak to us in public service announcements on tv. They don't care who you vote for, just vote.

The myth of capitalist democracy is a central political tool used by capitalism to keep the working class under control, to bolster its rule. But it's all nonsense and lies.

No matter what happens on election day, nothing will be decided that in any way can positively affect the lives and struggles of working people. No matter who wins, the workers will get shafted. The open economic crisis of capitalism is so deep and accelerates so fast, that no matter who wins, the government will be forced to implement the same austerity measures, the same onslaught against our standard of living. For workers it doesn't matter what party label is worn by the politician who exploits them, who cuts their benefits and makes their lives more of burden.

Today capitalist elections no longer decide anything of significance. The real power of government is concentrated today in the executive branch, primarily the permanent bureaucracy. Elections have become a political mystification, deceiving workers into thinking that they are free, that government serves their interests, while in reality the democratic state is merely the sophisticated class dictatorship of the capitalist class.

Workers can have no confidence in capitalist politicians or their phony elections. The only way working people can defend themselves and advance their interests is the class struggle — through strikes and demonstrations, through the development of class consciousness, building a movement controlled by workers themselves which can destroy capitalism once and for all.

— INTERNATIONALISM

Columbus' "Discovery" of America: 500 Years of Capitalist Violence

History has shown that Christopher Columbus was not the first to "discover" the lands of the Western Hemisphere. The native American population, whom Columbus called Indians because he believed until the day he died that he had found a new route to the East Indies, was descended from people who had migrated by foot across a land bridge from Asia thousands of years earlier. The Vikings had landed on North America hundreds of years before Columbus, and there is evidence that Japanese sailing vessels at one time may have reached the Pacific coast.

What made Columbus' arrival in the Western Hemisphere an historic achievement is that it corresponded to the economic needs of developing capitalism. Rising capitalism production constantly needed new markets and this exerted tremendous pressure for the expansion of trade. This in turn gave impetus to the age of discovery and geographic exploration. Unlike previous explorers, Columbus' efforts did not fade into oblivion because of its crucial role in the development of world economy.

"The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse

never before known, and thereby to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a new development." (Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*).

As the ruling class celebrates the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage, it grinds out glowing stories of the Renaissance as an age of scientific progress, discovery, artistic achievement and emerging liberty. In reality the Renaissance was an age of terror and poverty. Even from its first moments as a global system, capitalism came "into the world soiled with mire from top to toe, and oozing blood from every pore." (Marx, *Capital*, Chap. 24) The conquering of the New World was accomplished by genocide against the native American population, which was subjected to pillage and forced labor, to slavery, and decimated by diseases, such as syphilis and tuberculosis, brought by Europeans. In the first century of European domination, the native population of Mexico fell by 90 percent, from 25 to 1.5 million and by 95 percent in Peru.

Moreover, this violence and brutality was not simply limited to the peoples of the New World. Even in Europe capitalist development was marked by violence, theft and suffering. At the same time that the Indians were being decimated in the Americas, millions of peasants were being forcibly thrown off the land. Violently, ferociously, the rising bourgeoisie undermined the property and social

relations of the feudal period, stole the common lands and clan property and transformed them into modern private property. The dispossessed roamed the countryside, begging, stealing, dying. The lucky became wage slaves in capitalist production.

Capitalism has come along way in 500 years. It has created a global market, integrating the economies of the world. It has unleashed forces of production that for the first time in history have created the possibility to meet the material needs of all humanity. Yet its very capacity to produce has led it into an historic crisis of overproduction. Capitalism produces not to fulfill social need but to turn a profit, and it is paralyzed by the fact that it now produces more than can be profitably sold. Since the beginning of this century capitalism has been rotten, ready to be pushed aside and replaced by a new society, controlled directly by working people, in which production will be driven by social need, not profit.

The longer that capitalism continues to exist, the more it reminds us of the social characteristics of its birth, "soiled in mire and oozing blood." The ruling class can falsify its own history and spin fanciful stories about its past. The working class movement looks forward to the day when capitalism is confined to the scrap heap of history.

[See International Review 7 0 for major article on Columbus.]

4 Behind the Carnage in Yugoslavia Lies the Conflict between World Powers

The carnage continues in Yugoslavia. As readers know, it is now the turn of Bosnia-Herzegovina (after Croatia and Slovenia last year). Thousands of people have already died in the fighting. Others caught up in the turmoil will soon be dead because of starvation and disease. The 'lucky' ones have become 'refugees' - with all that this implies in terms of misery and suffering. As the barbarism of war continues, buildings, factories, farms, decades of accumulated labor, are being burned to ashes or blown to pieces. Why all this irrational human self-destruction in the name of ethnicity, religion and national identity? What are the real interests of the great capitalist powers in the Balkans' nightmare that lie behind their humanitarian posturing? Is there anything that the workers of the world can do about it?

YUGOSLAVIA: A LINK IN THE CHAIN OF DECOMPOSING CAPITALISM

Not very long ago, amidst the euphoria about the end of the so-called "cold war," the most prominent governments of the world told us that a new era of peace, a "new world order," would follow the collapse of the Stalinist bloc countries, which the bourgeoisie of the West and East alike, for reasons of mystification, used to call "communist," but which revolutionaries had always denounced as capitalist.

Very shortly events would reveal a very different reality. Warfare, famine, epidemic and innumerable other social and "natural" calamities increasingly tend to dominate the whole international situation. All the contradictions of a decadent system doomed by history are being exacerbated. Capitalism is rotting on its feet and sinking the whole planet into chaos. The carnage in the region of ex-Yugoslavia is just a particular expression of this decomposition, as are the ethnic and nationalist clashes in what used to be the USSR or the famine in the horn of Africa or the recent riots in Los Angeles.

But in addition to the stinking odor of capitalism's decomposition emanating from events in ex-Yugoslavia, one can also recognize in the turmoil all the characteristic features of the nationalist confrontation in this century: the anachronism of the formation of nations and particularly the imperialist nature of all nation-states in the epoch of capitalist decadence. From the very beginning of the collapse of Yugoslavia, the Serbian bourgeois clique has not made a secret of its intention to carve a Greater Serbia from the pieces of Yugoslavia. So few would deny the imperialist character of the war on Serbia's part. What about Croatia? When, during the past year, the Croatian bourgeoisie got the worst of it during its confrontation with Serbia, it could more or less hide its imperialist face behind the veil of "victim." But in the war in Bosnia, this costume has fallen. Croatia is struggling to conquer as much territory as it can. It is even very well known that Croatia and Serbia have already agreed on the slice of the Bosnian cake that each will take. Regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina, workers should not be deceived by the weak position of the dominant bourgeois fraction of this would-be Republic. They are the same gangsters who govern Serbia and Croatia. During the conflict, they have frequently ordered their troops to open fire on their own population (blaming it on the Serbs) in order to boost nationalist feelings.

In addition, it must be stressed that imperialism is not just the expansionist policies of this or that state, but "it is the product of a particular stage of the ripeness in the world development of capital, an innately international condition, an indivisible whole, that is recognizable only in all its relations, and from which no nation can hold aloof at will." (Rosa Luxemburg)

However, in the final analysis, what has placed this region in the center of

the international stage is not the petty imperialist confrontation of the would-be republics emerging from the breakup of Yugoslavia, but, above all, something far more representative of what is at stake in the evolution of capitalism today: the changing inter-imperialist relations between the most powerful capitalist nations in the world.

BEHIND THE CARNAGE IN YUGOSLAVIA: THE IMPERIALIST GAME OF THE GREAT POWERS

The collapse of the Stalinist military bloc brought with it the disappearance of its counterpart, the western bloc dominated by the U.S. The end of the international inter-imperialist relations which ruled the world since World War II immediately opened up a new imperialist constellations. On the one hand of course were countries grouped around the U.S., the only military superpower left. On the other hand, there was a tendency for some nations to group around Germany, a country which could pose its candidature as a bloc chief on the basis of its geographic position and powerful economy, even if it today it has only a very limited military capacity.

For the last two years, this tendency for states to reconstitute themselves into new competitive imperialist blocs has manifested itself in the evolution of the international situation, in particular as a factor aggravating the chaos that characterizes the decomposition of capitalism. Yugoslavia is a showcase example of this phenomenon.

Far from a platonic love for the "self-determination of nations," what has moved Germany to its firm support for the independence of Slovenia and Croatia is its imperialist interest in getting a door to the warm water of the Mediterranean Sea. The defeat of Croatia by Serbia last year (with the help of the U.S.) jeopardized this goal for a while. Today, with the conquest of the western part of Bosnia by Croatian forces, with the help of conventional arms supplied by

Germany, allowing it to protect its ports on the Dalmatian coast, the chances of Germany seeing its dream come true have improved again.

France also has its own imperialist game plan in the Balkan region. The French bourgeoisie is for the time being siding with Germany in its general opposition to the U.S. and its moves with the former toward the formation of a military bloc against the latter. Nonetheless, France is not interested in seeing Germany become too strong and particularly in letting it get access to the Mediterranean. This is why France has remained an ally of Serbia for so long. Besides, of course, the French bourgeoisie has its own imperialist interests in this zone of the world, which brings into opposition against Germany as well as the U.S.

The American bourgeoisie has not remained passive in the face of growing hellfire on the part of Germany and France, as well as others, like Turkey and Italy, for instance, which have their own imperialist interest in the Balkans. Assisted by its right hand, the British bourgeoisie, the U.S. has:

- done all it could to demonstrate the impotence of Europe in the face of the Yugoslav nightmare;
- supported Serbia against Slovenia and especially against Croatia, helping the Serbs to crush Croatia and thus frustrating German aspirations vis-à-vis the Mediterranean;
- currently put itself at the head of a crusade against Serbia in Bosnia-Herzegovina, threatening military intervention;

- opposed the de facto partition of Bosnia between the Croats and Serbs (which would benefit Germany, as demonstrated at the London peace conference at the end of August.

However, the permanent American offensive against its former allies has not prevented these nations from achieving some imperialist gains in the region. This is particularly true for Germany, whose Croatian allies are holding their positions in Bosnia to the benefit of German designs for access to the Mediterranean. To block this from happening, American imperialism has

been forced to step up its offensive. Currently, Uncle Sam is considering the option of direct military intervention, under the guise of "humanitarianism" and the "defense of Bosnia."

Such a new show of military force on the part of the U.S. would force the hand of the western powers by compelling them to line up behind America, demonstrating at the same time the impotence of Europe as a whole as well as that of the individual powers. Furthermore, it would allow the U.S. to get a foothold in Yugoslavia and thus directly counteract Germany's plans by blocking the Croatian offensive in Bosnia.

ONLY THE WORKING CLASS CAN OFFER A WAY OUT OF THE BLOODSHED IN EX-YUGOSLAVIA

The different national bourgeois groups in ex-Yugoslavia justified the warfare on the grounds of so-called right of "national self-determination." But today the nation is but a cloak that covers imperialistic desires, a battle cry for imperialistic rivalries, the last ideological measure with which the masses can be persuaded to play the role of cannon fodder in imperialist wars." (Rosa Luxemburg) The bourgeois media tells us that the central cause of the war in ex-Yugoslavia is the age-old national hatreds between its different ethnic populations. This is a big lie. It is capitalism as a whole which is responsible for the carnage. It is the bourgeoisie, local and international, that stirs up nationalist and ethnic feelings in order to get workers to shoot other workers, to wage war on behalf of and for the benefit of their exploiters.

The American bourgeoisie is preparing a bigger direct military involvement in ex-Yugoslavia in the name of "humanitarianism" and the "suffering of the Bosnian people." But the American bourgeoisie doesn't give a damn for the thousands being killed! This is nothing more than an alibi to cover its imperialist interests in the region.

The only social force that can stop war (any war) is the international working class - the class that pays for the war as soldiers (in terms of loss of life) and as "civilians" (in terms of increased misery). The working class has no fatherland and therefore no national interests to defend. But to stop the barbarism of war it has to destroy capitalism, and in order to do this the working class has to recognize itself as an international social force, with common interests and a common historical mission. - Eduardo Smith

Famine in Somalia: The Bitter Fruit of Imperialism

In Somalia today 1.5 million people face death by starvation in the next few months. Another 4 million are on the verge of starvation. We see the images nightly on the television screen. Babies with distended bellies. Mothers incapable of keeping their children alive. Now the major imperialist powers cry crocodile tears at the suffering and promise humanitarian relief. Yet it is the same imperialist powers, most notably the U.S. which must bear responsibility for the tragedy in Somalia.

Somalia and Ethiopia, which lie at the mouth of the Red Sea and opposite the Arabian peninsula have immense strategic importance for American imperialism as it strives to maintain its dominance as the world's sole remaining superpower. In the 1970s and '80s, the region was in a theatre in the deadly struggle between the American and Russian imperialist blocs. At first Ethiopia, under Haile Selassie was allied with the U.S., while the USSR worked with Somalia's military dictator, Siad Barre. Russian imperialism supported rebels in Eritrea, Tigre and Wollo areas within Ethiopia. Russian bloc arms were funnelled through Syria, Iraq and Libya, while the U.S. supplied weapons to Ethiopia. There was an exchange of pieces on the imperialist chess board in the mid 1970s. In 1974, the Ethiopian military overthrew Haile Selassie and declared itself "Marxist" and switched allegiances to the Russian bloc. Meanwhile, the U.S. picked up Somalia, allying with Barre and the "Marxist" guerrillas in northern Ethiopia. Then Somalia launched a war against Ethiopia over the Ogaden region.

Meanwhile, the impoverished population suffered from the bloodshed and



from the famine in Ethiopia in 1984-85. At the same time, food was being shipped into Somalia to support the government. After all, Somalia had expelled the Russians and signed a military agreement, giving the U.S. access to ports and airfields close to the Red Sea and potential zones of conflict in the Persian Gulf. The Somali government was paid off in arms and food. Most of the emergency food supplies went to government employees and the military, used as a means to bolster civil servants' salaries. State employees often resold surplus food at exorbitant prices. This type of aid only contributed to the collapse of local agriculture and made things worse. It's

small wonder that today's hands of armed thugs steal and resell relief supplies meant for the starving masses. They learned it from western imperialism during the heyday of the Cold War.

The U.S. strategy of maintaining Barre's corrupt regime with aid could only be temporary. The regime was overturned in April last year and Somalia soon descended into chaos. The economy collapsed. Armed gunmen from rival clans terrorized the population. Famine and mass starvation became an everyday reality.

Even here there is something to gain for the major imperialisms. The media campaign to keep workers' minds off their own declining living standards in the capitalist metropolises is also a golden opportunity to ram home the lie that "humanitarian aid" requires military intervention. The reality is that food and military aid have played a key role in the disintegration of Somalia. Nevertheless the media will repeat this lie over and over to try and get the population ready to accept imperialist war as a humanitarian necessity. At the same time, it gives the U.S. a chance to take a swipe at France, which also has imperialist interests in the area, as a reprisal for France's growing support of German imperialism.

Somalia today is nothing but the "natural" product of decadent capitalism. Its phase of decomposition, "humanitarian aid" under capitalism is not designed to help people or save lives, but to aid one or another imperialist power at the expense of its rivals - and of the suffering population. AF

The Italian Communist Left, 1926-45

5

The history of the workers' movement does not just include its mass battles to defend its conditions of life within capitalism and its open confrontations with the state in revolutionary periods, when the revolutionary party achieves a widespread and decisive impact on the evolution of events. The history of the working class is also expressed in the struggle of small revolutionary groups which are isolated and unknown in periods of proletarian defeat and counter-revolution. Their struggle, one of drawing the lessons of defeat and preparing for future victories, is no less important for the final victory of the working class than the latter's mass struggles. In fact, as the work Lenin and the Bolsheviks between 1903-17 shows, it can prove indispensable for this victory.

The history of the Italian Communist Left 1926-45 is the history of such a determined fight of a fraction and is the subject of a book recently published by the International Communist Current in English, which describes the development of their activity and political positions in the context of the events of the 30s and 40s (it was first published in French in 1981).

Some people will think that such a history of a small communist tendency is now redundant after the collapse of the USSR and the imperialist bloc which it dominated. This point of view is consistent with the barrage of ruling class propaganda in recent months and years about the 'death of communism'. The press of the ICC has tried to combat this lying equation of Stalinism with communism, and shown that Stalinism was the very negation of the communist revolution. It was the principle agent of the counter-revolution. We will not repeat our arguments here, but only mention instead that the history of the communist left helped keep alive the reality of communism against the lies both of Stalinist Russia and the democratic imperialist powers who equated it with concentration camps, genocide and brutal exploitation.

The Italian Communist Left was one of the most important tendencies which battled against the longest and deepest counter-revolution that the working class has ever experienced. The revolutionary minorities that are developing now owe their existence and their political principles in large part to this tendency (even if they are unaware of its existence). It was this tendency which, in the blackest years of the century, remained faithful to the internationalist principles of the working class and rejected all imperialist camps, both during the war in Spain from 1936-39 and during the second world war. But not only did the Italian Communist Left remain faithful to these interests, against the prevalent myths of 'socialism in one country', anti-fascism, 'united and popular fronts', and 'national liberation struggles', it also saw its task as drawing the lessons of the defeated October Revolution of 1917 and the degeneration of the Communist International.

From this work it intended to create the basis for an 'international left ideology', and thus lay the basis for the future resurgence of the working class' revolutionary struggle. It was no accident that one of the most important publications of the Italian Communist Left was called *Bilan*, which is the French word for 'balance-sheet'. This theoretical journal was published monthly from November 1933 till February 1938.

Neither 'Bordigist' nor Italian
This book may well be a revelation to those who accept the dominant illusion perpetrated by various leftist groups that the Italian Communist Left was represented by Antonio Gramsci. This book sets the record straight, showing that Amadeo Bordiga was the main representative of the left of the Italian Communist Party, represented by some 30,000 militants, from its formation in 1921 till its expulsion in 1926. The Italian Communist Left:

"...emerged in Italy during the years preceding the first world war, around Amadeo Bordiga, who was its main inspiration, and from 1921 to 1925 it was to be found at the head of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). In this period Gramsci's current played no more than a secondary role within the party, as its right wing." (p7), Italian Communist Left).

However, this book is not a history of 'Bordigism', nor is it, despite the title, about a specifically 'Italian' tendency. The Italian Communist Left was characterised not by the personality of its best known representative but by the intransigence of its political positions, which

were determined by collective discussion and action, not by individual charisma. In fact, in the crucial period between 1926 and 1945 Bordiga did not participate in the Italian Communist Left.

The Italian Communist Left was not a national opposition to the degeneration of the Italian Communist Party. It was the tendency which most insisted that the Communist International was the World Party of the working class whose interests took precedence over all national interests, including those of Russia, 'home' of the CI. After its expulsion from the degenerated Comintern, which abandoned internationalism by declaring in favour of 'socialism in one country', the militants of the Italian Communist Left were forced to flee Italy, and pursued their work in exile in France Belgium and elsewhere. It saw its activity as fundamentally international in scope. This history is thus very important for revolutionaries in Britain, where insularity is traditional, since it provides proof that the development of communist principles doesn't respect national frontiers.

The internationalist nature of the Italian Communist Left should thus serve as a warning to those revolutionaries who want to find their history within their own country, without looking at the totality of the contribution of the communist lefts, (see the review in this issue of *World Revolution* of the pamphlet on the British Left Communism.)

For those who are already looking beyond the confines of Britain, this book will throw some light on the differences between the groups, both in Britain and elsewhere, which claim continuity with the Italian Communist Left.

Not a sect

Of course some will contemptuously reject the Italian Communist Left as a 'sect' with no impact on the course of events. The militants of the Italian Communist Left were schooled in the upsurge of the working class during the revolutionary wave, and recognised as a vanguard within the combative working class. Their later isolation and extreme numerical reduction, was not the result of any 'sectarianism', but resulted from the fact that they held on firmly to revolutionary principles in a period of profound defeat and disorientation of the working class after the revolutionary wave had been crushed.

The Italian Left made every effort to break out of its isolation through the confrontation of its ideas with those of other oppositional tendencies but resisted any unprincipled regroupment, as in this reply to a proposal to participate in a conference of opposition groups:

"There are many oppositions. That's bad; but there is no other remedy than a confrontation between their respective ideologies, a polemic, in order to arrive later on at what you propose... Our watchword is to take our efforts to a deeper level, without being guided by the lure of a result which would in fact be a new failure. We think it is vital to understand each other thoroughly before we can agree whether this or

that group is making a true left critique." (p56 ibid).

In such periods, the only other way to break out of isolation was to give in to the dominant illusions infecting the working class and indulge in opportunist party-building. This is what happened to the Trotskyist Opposition, which although a proletarian response to the Stalinist counter-revolution, fell into the traps laid by the latter, believing that a new revolutionary party and even a new international could be rebuilt in a period of working class rout. Trotskyist opportunism didn't end there. It also included: entristism into social-democracy, defence of the popular front in Spain, defence of USSR imperialism up to and during the second world butchery, and even supporting the democratic imperialisms. In fact the accusation of sectarianism levelled at the Italian Left reveals more about the accusers:

"Those who talk with contempt of the 'sectarian' nature of the Communist Left, whether German or Italian, are the same who, yesterday and today, have chosen their camp: alongside the so-called 'socialist camp' of Stalinism and the official 'workers parties'. These were, and still are, 'with the masses': but always with the aim of leading the masses away from their revolutionary goal." (p176, ibid).

If the Italian Left remained isolated in this period this is no way resulted from any diffidence in presenting its views, not only to other oppositions, but to the working class as a whole. In spite of the fact that it found itself swimming against the stream, it defended working class interests without any reticence, in situations which put its militants in extreme danger, as during the Spanish events, and during the Second World War.

Many readers will probably be surprised to learn from this book that the Trotskyist Opposition was not the only tendency to try to resist Stalinism. The Italian Communist Left fought it, but more coherently and consistently, understanding the period within which it operated, and able to resist the traps which ensnared Trotskyism.

The Italian Communist Left, in comparison with Trotskyism, also had the advantage of having resisted the degeneration of the Communist International much earlier, with its rejection of parliamentarism, workers' and peasants' governments, anti-fascist fronts, united fronts with social democracy, and the 'Bolshevisation' of the communist parties. This gave it an important basis from which to maintain its positions, and to develop its balance sheet of the defeat of the Russian Revolution.

The Italian Left was not the only communist left

The German Left was also extremely important. On many questions, the latter in the early Twenties came to more far sighted conclusions than the Italian Left, conclusions which are close to the positions defended by revolutionaries today: on the importance of the workers councils, the reactionary nature of the trade unions, the non-substitutionist role of the Party, the decadence of capitalism. But the strength of the Italian Communist Left was its method, its theoretical and organisational rigour, which enabled it to both weather the counter-revolutionary storms with much greater success, and to integrate its 'bilan' into a global vision, more slowly but more thoroughly, without rejecting key fundamentals of Marxism. Unlike the German Left, the Italian left understood its marginalisation and expulsion from the Communist Parties as the expression of a profound defeat in the world proletariat and had no illusions about replacing the decaying Comintern, until this defeat had been overcome. The German Left by contrast, thought it was possible to create a new international, the KAI, in 1922, having rejected the October Revolution and the Comintern as the product of the bourgeoisie. The Italian Left looked deeper into the defeat of the October Revolution:

"Your way of expressing yourself does not seem right to me. One cannot say that the Russian revolution was a bourgeois revolution. The 1917 revolution was a proletarian revolution even if it was an error to generalise its 'tactical' lessons. Now the problem is posed as to what happens to the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, if the revolution does not carry on in other countries. There can be a counter-revolution; there can be a process of degeneration whose symptoms and reflections within the communist party have to be discovered and de-

fined. One cannot simply say that Russian is a country where capitalism is expanding." (Letter of Bordiga to Karl Korsch, 1926, p 27, ibid).

Armed with this method, the Italian Left subsequently explained the speed with which the isolated Russian Revolution decayed by pointing to the negative effects which flowed from the incorporation of the revolutionary party within the state which emerged after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. This state continued to express the division of society into classes and to act as a conservative weight against the proletariat. The Italian Left therefore concluded the necessity for the vigilant domination by the working class and its revolutionary party over the post-insurrectional state, condemning the identification of the Bolshevik Party with the state against the working class - exemplified at Kronstadt, and in the war against Makhno.

It did not therefore reject the October revolution out of hand, a rejection which led the German Left to a denial of the history of the 'old' workers movement and to its speedy disintegration, before it could fulfil the tasks the Italian left accomplished.

However, revolutionary positions today cannot be based on the method of picking out the 'best' communist left as one's antecedents. A global and critical synthesis has to be made of the contributions of all the lefts. In large measure this was already achieved by a group which came out of the Italian left during the second world war, which published the review *Internationalisme*. The platform of the ICC is essentially based on the work of this group.

In this sense the Italian Left fulfilled its task of providing a bridge from the revolutionary upsurge of the past and its revolutionary minorities to those of the future. It's up to today's revolutionary militants to acquaint themselves with their own history. This study of the Italian Left, based on detailed, original research, will help them to do that. FS

Behind the Currency Crisis

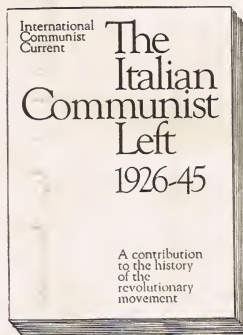
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developing. We've seen it over the Uruguay Round of GATT talks for example, and a whole series of strategies to grab a portion of the world market by one nation at the expense of its rivals.

The measures taken by the German Bundesbank to preserve its own currency stability at the expense of its rivals is another fundamental symptom of this system of every man for himself.

In this desperate competitive struggle, the working class will be 'asked' again and again to make the necessary sacrifices.

But the working class isn't just the victim of capitalism. History compels the proletariat, as a result of its conquests of state and fundamental interests, to settle accounts with this moribund social system. The open development of the economic impasse at the heart of capitalism today more than ever reveals the revolutionary tasks of the working class. FS



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There's No Home For Revolutionaries in Anarchism

Ideas and Action, is a journal published by the Workers Solidarity Alliance (WSA), which is the result of a regroupment of several libertarian-anarchist groupless. (The most recent issue we have received is #16, which we think came out last winter. It doesn't indicate a publication date, but it seems to appear with regularity.) This issue shows some real strengths in attempting to defend working class positions, but suffers from a romantic clinging to anarchist illusions and a failure to recognize that Marxism is the theory of the liberation of the working class.

One of the major articles, entitled "On Imperialist Barbarism & the Need for World Democracy," by T.W. presenting a discussion of the international situation as of mid-1991 when the Persian Gulf War was still on everyone's mind and takes up a polemic against fellow anarchists of Love & Rage who reject the notion that the working class is the historic agent of revolutionary change. We salute the effort to defend the revolutionary nature of the proletariat in the face of anti-working class ravings.

The first section of T.W.'s article is a discussion of the Persian Gulf war which has some insights but does not go far enough in understanding its significance. After correctly insisting that the destruction of Iraq was not necessary for a US victory, the text makes serious errors.

"This was one event in multinational capital's ongoing struggle with third world nationalism, a powerful 'lesson' to nation-states that do not obey the 'rules of the game' laid down by the major capitalist power centers."

The US wanted to teach a lesson. But the essential targets were not third world states but, rather, major powers (like Germany, France, Japan) who might be tempted to challenge US dominance in pursuing their own needs. The fall of the ex-USSR's empire meant that maintaining discipline within the old western bloc would become difficult. Recent events have shown a widening of tensioning between the US and many of its former major allies. Reminding these countries that the US has such savage power -and is prepared to use it- was a far more central goal than teaching a lesson to third world countries.

The text notes that competition from Japan and western Europe has grown to such a degree that "the main sectors of the [US] business class (sic) can now see no way out other than relying on this country's one remaining advantage: Military Muscle." But T.W. doesn't push the analysis far enough to note the implication for the US vis-a-vis the Persian Gulf war.

By assuming "multinational capital" has a real, pre-eminent existence in capitalism today, T.W. falls for bourgeois ideology which seeks to hide the integral link between major corporations with international business interests and their particular national state. In fact, it's an important smoke-screen to deny the reality of state capitalism, the form taken by capitalism since World War I.

In tracing the evolution of imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, T.W. overstates the importance for the entire history of world capitalism of the US ascendancy following World War II, while missing the truly epoch-making watershed at the start of World War I when imperialism, having conquered the planet, pushed capitalism into its decadent phase.

On imperialism T.W. writes, "Dominate or be dominated is as much the logic of competition between nation-states as between businesses. The imperialist tendency is inherent in every state. The formation of new nation-states can no more put an end to imperialism than the formation of new businesses can put an end to capitalism. The 'defeat' of one empire in this or that region, or the long-term decline of a formerly dominant power, will not bring an end to the system of imperialism but merely facilitate the rise of a new empire, or the rise of numerous mini-imperialist tendencies

with all the dangers of military conflict that implies." The text goes on to say: "The only way out of this trap is to replace the nation-state system by developing a democratic structure of coordination for the whole planet...The only social force that could bring about this global democratic change is worker solidarity extended across national boundaries, solidarity on an international scale."

So far so good, although we question I&A's use of such terms as "democratic structure," "democratic change" and "worker solidarity." Clearly, Bush, Major, Kohl and Mitterrand support "democratic change" and even "democratic change" (as in the changes in the political changes seen in the ex-eastern bloc the past few years). "Worker solidarity" is supported by the likes of the AFL-CIO, no friend of the working class. Precision in taking position on political questions is vital because the ruling class has co-opted organizations that originated in the working class and democracy is championed by the bourgeoisie.

The I&A text indicates "many American anarchists do not agree with our emphasis upon worker solidarity." Amongst these anarchists, the main advocate of the leftist line of national liberation struggle is the paper Love & Rage whose editors have recently taken us to task for what they call 'class reductionism.'

The text quotes Love & Rage: "Many anarchists have embraced a 'class analysis' of the international situation that amounts to class reductionism, that is to say reducing a complex set of social relations to their class component and ignoring the autonomous character of other lines of struggle...An authentic and revolutionary anarchism needs to oppose the domination of weak nations by strong nations and see the fight for national self-determination as an authentic com-

Hurricane Andrew

A Natural Phenomenon Made A Disaster by Capitalism

Hurricane Andrew was the worst natural disaster in U.S. history. With its 165 mile-per-hour winds, heavy rains and swollen seas, the class 5 hurricane (the worst there is) left South Florida in shambles. Literally overnight, 250,000 people became homeless and 86,000 jobs were obliterated. Property damage has been estimated at \$20 billion, twice that wrought by Hurricane Hugo in 1989. There is no way to gauge the emotional and psychological impact of this devastation on the victims, who lost all their earthly possessions, their life-savings, their homes, their communities. Already there are reports filtering out of Dade county about sharp increases in mental illness and domestic violence, as residents find themselves overwhelmed by their situation.

What makes this all the more tragic is that devastation on this magnitude was not necessary or inevitable. This was a natural disaster made worse by decadent capitalism. There were social forces as well as natural forces at work in Florida. Readers will recall that the ICC has frequently stressed that the impact of natural disasters has historically been accentuated during the decadent periods of any mode of production, whether slave society, feudalism or capitalism. The economic and social collapse of a system in decay undercuts society's ability to prevent and respond to the challenges of nature. Andrew is a prime example.

For years experts and long-time Florida residents warned that the dramatic population influx into "sunny" Florida during the post-war period posed the potential for a hurricane-related catastrophe. The concern was that the newcomers had no experience in dealing with the hurricanes that occasionally strike the area, that they would not know how to seek safety and that the construction of unsafe housing and other buildings would add to the danger. The implication was that South Florida was

not safe for large population concentrations unless special construction methods were utilized. The fact that the overwhelming majority of homes and buildings in the storm's path had their roofs and exterior walls literally blown away by the wind demonstrates that these fears were well-founded.

The capitalist media and politicians have tried to blame the massive destruction on unscrupulous building contractors who put up illegal, substandard structures. Of course it's true that many contractors cut corners and put up inferior structures. Unscrupulousness is, after all, characteristic of capitalist business relations. However, even buildings which met the local building code were totally inadequate to stand up to Hurricane Andrew. The code required that buildings be capable of withstanding winds of up to 125 miles-per-hour. Such buildings could not survive Andrew's 165 mile-per-hour winds. Officials explain that a more stringent requirement would have made buildings prohibitively expensive. Rather than require that buildings be constructed safely enough to withstand a class five hurricane, the local capitalist state gambled that the odds were against a class five storm striking the area. The drive for profits was directly responsible for the extensiveness of storm damage.

It was capitalism that built inadequate homes and buildings in a primary hurricane zone. It was capitalism that overdeveloped and overpopulated such a danger zone. It was the capitalist state that is proving incapable of meeting the needs of the storm's victims and rebuilding the area. It is just one more reminder that capitalism is an historic anachronism that must be pushed aside by working class revolution and replaced by a society that structures society to meet social need and human safety. - JC

or fixation on false, romantic notions of the working class revolution.

In failing to adopt a systematic, critical approach to the history of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and in romantically clinging to myths of the Spanish CNT (which betrayed the working class at the time of the Spanish Civil War, and today is a union, which serves to control and contain working class struggles for the benefit of capitalism), the Workers Solidarity Alliance limits any potential it can have to push forward the interests of the international working class and its revolutionary aspirations. Those elements within this tendency who sincerely want to further the cause of the international working class revolution should recognize the reality that there is no home for proletarian revolutionaries in anarchism today. -Eric Fischer

Internationalist Perspective: IN SEARCH OF A NEW WORKING CLASS

In Internationalist Perspective #21 and #22, texts describe the respective authors' efforts to identify who the revolutionary working class is today -- and how the workers previously identified by Marxists are no longer essential to the future struggles. Thus, they show their own retreat from clarity. IP discusses a "recomposition" of the proletariat. With these articles the publishers of IP (the so-called External Fraction of the ICC) continue their retreat from revolutionary Marxism and their immersion in a sea of dilettantism and opportunism.

In IP 21, IP's McIntosh tells us "World capitalism is today in the throes of the final stage of...the transition from the formal to the real domination of capital." Finally there is the "collective worker" of the "synchronous strata...the working class who are the expression of the most advanced stage of capitalist production...generated by the most up to date and technologically advanced organization of the production and accumulation processes. By non-synchronous strata, I mean those parts of the working class who are an expression of earlier, more primitive (sic) stages of capitalist production, such as piece work, the Taylor system, etc." It is the professional, the doctor, the computer programmer, and the scientist, rather than the miner, factory worker or truck driver, "on whom the prospects for a world revolution and the advent of communism...must today be based."

The real domination of capital came about in the nineteenth century, preceding the entry of capitalism into its phase of decadence. If IP insists that capitalism is only now completing its transition to real domination, then IP rejects the Marxist position on the capitalist decadence. Falling on the bourgeois ideology, IP's learned author seems to believe that factory production is gone, that scientists and thinkers are the active force of capitalist production. Even if factories are shutting down in the industrial powers, and relocating to low-cost sites in the third world, the central role of productive workers does not go away. The modern, "synchronous" high tech industries are suffering under the weight of the open crisis. It is IBM which this year alone is reducing its workforce in the US by forty thousand.

In IP 22, GS writes, "The stakes of this more or less rapid mutation of labor involve what can be designated as a crisis of the proletariat, in terms of its consciousness, including its very class identity. The wage relation is transformed and exploitation assumes new forms, sometimes both more subtle and ferocious than before. There is a fundamental shift within the capitalist relations of production..."

Yes, there is a crisis of class identity and consciousness -- for the IP. The IP takes up theoretical insights of the 'new leftists' of the Students for a Democratic Society of the sixties. Those students /intellectuals under the influence of Herbert Marcuse's false theory of a "One Dimensional" working class (a class for capital) sought to identify a "new working class" of professionals, white collar workers, and intellectuals who were more acceptable to SDS militants. Today, the 'Marxism' of IP has less and less to do with the revolutionary theory and practice of the proletariat. - EF

The Machiavellianism of the Bourgeoisie

The question of the machiavellianism of the bourgeoisie provoked animated discussion at an informal roundtable meeting with readers and sympathizers this summer. The focal point of discussion was the degree to which the ruling class consciously manipulates events. This came up both in regard to the Los Angeles riots and the presidential election campaign.

In regard to the riots in Los Angeles last spring doubts were expressed about whether the bourgeoisie had maneuvered to provoke the rioting, as the ICC has argued. In regard to the election, questions were raised about the capacity of the bourgeoisie to manipulate the electoral process to assure the most desirable results from its point of view. Some concern was raised that the ICC was advocating a conspiracy theory of history.

While it is true that the bourgeoisie is incapable of being fully conscious of the workings of capitalist society (only a marxist viewpoint from the proletarian perspective is capable of that), it would foolhardy to underestimate the ability of the bourgeoisie to develop strategies in its confrontations with the working class and with its imperialist rivals. It would also be naive to ignore the ability of the ruling class to develop a tactical approach to achieve its strategic goals. This doesn't necessarily mean that the bourgeoisie consciously decides and controls every political and social event in society. We are not arguing that the ruling class is omnipotent. However, it certainly has at its disposal a vast state apparatus, including the mass media, to take advantage of situations as they develop.

It is always difficult to prove the existence of a conspiracy, especially for revolutionaries who do not have access to the secret deliberations of the state. However, with historical evidence there are many examples of state conspiracy and manipulation which demonstrate the machiavellianism of the bourgeoisie. Examples in the U.S. include the Kennedy administration conspiracy to assassinate South Vietnamese President Diem in 1963, the Johnson administration conspiracy to use what it knew to be false reports of a North Vietnamese attack on two American ships to justify the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which was in turn used as a substitute declaration of war in Vietnam, and the Iran/Contra affair. More recently, we can point to the fact that the Savings & Loan scandal was not revealed by the government until just after the 1988 election or the Bush administration's six-month delay in the release of a Labor Department study which showed that the number of working poor had risen dramatically in the past decade. The list is endless.

In Los Angeles, we have argued that the occurrence of such serious blunders as the withdrawal of police from the scene of the outbreak of the riot, the failure of the police to cordon off the riot zone and thereby allowing white motorists to drive right into the heart of the riot, the inexplicable delays in deploying troops ("they had no bullets") seems to constitute a suspicious pattern. After all, this is the same bourgeoisie that has pulled off invasions of Grenada, Panama and Iraq in the last two years without such serious glitches. The fact that the bourgeoisie immediately seized on the riots to rekindle racism to divide the working class and to mobilize political support for strengthening the repressive apparatus lends further to

support to the view that some kind of bourgeois maneuver was involved.

As for the elections, for working class revolutionaries to think this is a genuinely democratic process is to fall prey to bourgeois ideology. To think that things just happen the way they do purely by chance, would be to downgrade the importance of theoretical elaboration and the role of consciousness in confronting the class enemy. From such a perspective, the American ruling class would have to be perceived as the luckiest bourgeoisie in the world, rather than as the most powerful -- a serious underestimation. Not everything is predetermined, and the ruling class can't guarantee the outcome of every manipulation it attempts. If they did have complete control over events, then revolution would be impossible. But it is important for workers to understand that they confront a treacherous class adversary, which is expert at manipulation, lying, distorting and conspiring. -- INTERNATIONALISM

NAFTA AGAINST THE WORKERS

Continued from p.8

of national sovereignty" and "national markets."

Both right and left are seeking to make workers believe that their problems can be solved under capitalism. According to them, all that is needed is a "good" treaty. We have to emphasize that the left of the bourgeoisie, whether in the U.S. or Mexico, does not object to the signing of the trade agreement. What they put forward are only modifications, which in their content offer exactly the same promises: growing production, employment and American integration. It is the same spreading of illusions among the working class about the "wonderful" future of capitalism while this system is rotting on its feet with nothing to offer except chaos, wars and famine.

As a finishing touch, both right and left have been spreading the idea that the creation of jobs in one country will be done at the expense of jobs in the other. The unions particularly specialize in spreading this message. In the U.S. they say: "the low wages of the Mexican workers will cause the lay-off of American workers." In Mexico they say: "the greater productivity of American workers will bring lay-offs for Mexican workers." In a few words the American proletariat is blamed for the lot of Mexican workers, and vice versa. This vile lie, spread by the bourgeoisie in a similar way all around the world (for instance, in Europe immigrant workers are blamed for growing unemployment), has the objective of making workers confront each other, dividing workers against themselves and pushing them to defend the interests of their exploiters.

This is an idea that workers must reject vigorously. Lay-offs are not provoked by our class brothers. It is the desire for profits by the capitalist class, and the continued existence of rotten capitalism and its chronic crisis that are the underlying causes not only of lay-offs but also the growing poverty and exploitation in which workers must live. The bourgeoisie seeks to strike a blow against the class unity of the working class, especially its international unity, which is one of the bases of its future revolutionary struggle.

The working class must not allow itself to be drawn behind the ideology of its mortal enemy. It must understand that NAFTA will not bring it any benefit. But it must also understand that the false opposition to the treaty, championed by the left wing of capital, is a trap to make it fall into the same hole: the acceptance of the maneuvers undertaken on behalf of capital.

The only terrain on which the working class can defend itself, not only against the blows of NAFTA, but against a whole range of capitalist attacks as well, is that of its class struggle -- wide, united and international -- for its own interests.

— Leonardo, Sept. 1992

PUBLIC MEETING:

NO! TO ELECTIONS YES! TO CLASS STRUGGLE

A Revolutionary Perspective on the Capitalist Electoral Circus

Date: Friday
Oct. 16th

Time: 7:30PM

Place: Workmen's Circle
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MK

NAFTA IS AN ATTACK ON WORKERS THROUGHOUT NORTH AMERICA

This article has been contributed by an ICC comrade in Mexico.

A heavy cloud of lies and phony promises aimed at the working class surrounds all that is officially published about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the U.S., Mexico and Canada.

In Mexico, the Salina's government presents NAFTA as the foundation of the country's economic future. In the U.S., the propaganda is more discreet. A few years ago the U.S. and Canada signed a free trade agreement and its implementation coincided with the worst recession and most massive unemployment to the Canada in years. Thus, the ruling class cannot be overly optimistic about the new agreement. Nonetheless, Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney and President Bush haven't neglected to use NAFTA in a manner very similar to that used by their Mexican counterpart. The Canadian prime minister speaks of the transformation of North America "into the biggest commercial bloc in the world." The American president uses NAFTA as a theme in the election campaign, promising that the treaty's implementation will mean the creation of new jobs.

We are told that NAFTA will bring the opening of new markets, and thus an increase in production, the creation of new jobs and, finally, the improvement of the standard of living of the working population. According to official propaganda, these predictions are based on the "fact" that the three North American nations will have "access to each others' markets" thanks to the elimination of obstacles to free trade (custom tariffs, etc) and the definition of "fair" commercial rules (elimination of subsidies and dumping, for example).

NAFTA REFLECTS THE GLOBAL TRADE WAR

In this way the capitalist ideologues put as a cause that which is only an effect of insufficient markets. In reality, the problems for the realization of commodities are not caused by tariffs and import duties, or because this or that country is denied access to the "potential" market of another. On the contrary, it is the saturation of the world market which imposes on each national capital the necessity to defend tooth and nail its internal market, as well as the necessity to fight for the conquest of external markets.

The whole world is the scene of a vast commercial war, from which no country can escape — a war that the current recession only makes worse. The collapse of the GATT talks is only

one proof of the relentlessness of this commercial war. In this context, the multiplication of trade agreements does not express a tendency towards "regional integration," as the ideologues want us to believe, but on the contrary expresses the bitterness of this war, which pushes countries to form alliances against others. These are unstable alliances, which exclude neither the subordination of the weaker to the strongest nor the practice of mutual back-stabbing among "friends".

NAFTA will not open any new market. Its real goal is to provide a shield against foreign competition, to contain, for example, the further penetration of Japanese and German auto companies. At the same time, it will establish a mechanism for a re-division of the current market among the most powerful enterprises in the region, sacrificing weaker ones.

NAFTA IS INTENDED TO CONTAIN DECOMPOSITION

However, NAFTA is not strictly a "commercial affair." It has profound implications for regional imperialist policy.

It is not that the U.S. is trying to give itself an exclusive economic and political zone in Latin America. It is struggling to keep it under its control. In the first place, it is part of the struggle against the ravages of decomposition, but it is also a weapon against the eventual flirtation of some Latin American bourgeoisies with foreign powers that are disputing American world supremacy.

Regarding decomposition, the U.S. faces the danger of a massive uncontrolled migration of people from Latin America trying to escape the growing threat of famine, war and chaos in that region. Armed with a bunch of legal and repressive measures, American capitalism is trying to control, though not totally impede, the flow of immigrants entering the U.S. through the Mexican frontier — another evidence of the hypocrisy of capitalist "humanitarianism."

In addition, American capital is also trying to gain control over (and eventually utilize) other effects of social decomposition in Latin America. In this context, NAFTA is part of a larger project of the American bourgeoisie, in connivance with the local bourgeoisie in the region, known as "initiative for the Americas, which seeks to contain the effects of decomposition — particularly those that could

impact on the U.S. Uncle Sam is trying to "stabilize" the region economically, socially and politically, starting with Mexico, its closest neighbor.

The U.S. wants to keep its southern frontier quiet, creating a cushion that will absorb the effects of decomposition — for instance, to contain emigration from Central and South America in Mexico. Regarding economic stabilization, because of the absence of credits after the "lost decade" of the 1980s in this region, the only option today is to encourage direct American capital investment by offering a variety of incentives.

NAFTA IS ALSO A WEAPON IN THE CONFRONTATION WITH GERMAN AND JAPANESE IMPERIALISMS

The second concern that worries American imperialism is the need to prevent any Latin American flirtation with Germany and Japan. Such concern was particularly evident after Peru's "auto-coup-d'etat," which clearly was not on the agenda of American secret services. In addition, Fujimori has shown clear sympathy for Japan and its imperialist strategy in the Pacific.

Furthermore, one should not forget that historically there have existed certain Latin American bourgeois fractions inclined to cut themselves off from American tutelage and seek closer ties to European powers, especially Germany. Today, as Germany poses its candidature as leader of an imperialist bloc, these fractions may raise their heads. The idea of creating a rapid deployment force under the control of the OAS discussed in an American newspaper is a warning to the Latin American bourgeoisies that the U.S. is disposed to prevent any "adventure" putting in question its supremacy in what it considers its own backyard.

taking the above into account, we can understand why the ideological discourse on NAFTA emphasizes "fidelity" towards the U.S. The treaty would open up the door to "American integration." Obviously it would be ridiculous to think that American capital wants to form an imperialist bloc exclusively of American nations, which would confront Europe, and Japan, as has been suggested by certain ideologues. However, Latin America has a strategic importance for

the U.S. First, because it wants to protect its rearguard from foreign commercial, political and even military influences. Second, because the U.S. must protect what in fact constitutes its strategic reserve of raw materials: petroleum, agricultural products, etc. and also human cannon fodder for the eventual wars of the future. It is not an "accident" that NAFTA, for example, guarantees the supply of petroleum and petroleum derivatives from Mexico.

IMPACT ON THE WORKING CLASS

Regarding the immediate and direct consequences to the working class, NAFTA will bring lay-offs everywhere. Obsolete enterprises, unable to compete, will be swept aside, throwing thousands of workers into the streets. Stronger enterprises will also cut their workforces in order to "face the challenge of competition." The transfer of capital will also mean the disappearance of jobs. NAFTA does not eliminate the dynamic of the recession: destruction of capital, with its wave of lay-offs. What it can do is "regulate" this dynamic according to the interests of the most powerful capitals.

Does this mean that workers should struggle against NAFTA? This is what the left of capital has proposed. In the U.S., the left wing of the Democratic party and in Mexico the Partido de la Revolución Democrática, as well as unions in both countries, are calling for a rejection of the treaty, because it will cause lay-offs. However, this call is a trap that workers should be aware of.

The bourgeoisie has organized a wide maneuver against the working class, in which, once again, the right wing in government and the left in opposition are sharing the task of mystifying the working class. By organizing a phony debate around NAFTA, both fractions of the bourgeoisie are trying to draw workers to the bourgeois terrain, to the "defense

continued on p.7

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Order from Internationalism.

Political positions of the ICC

Internationalism is the section in the U.S. of the International Communist Current which defends the following political positions

- * Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- * The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions have been provided by the rest of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.
- * The staffed regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc. and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.
- * Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring

nothing but humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

- * All the nationalist ideologues — "national independence," the "right of nations to self-determination" etc. — whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interest and for the profit of their exploiters.

- * In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that parliament is the best way to change the system, to exploit. "Democracy," a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not offer us rest from the bourgeoisie or capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

- * All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called "workers," "Socialist" and "Communist" parties (now ex-"Communist"), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-"Maoists"), official "anarchists" constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of "popular fronts," "anti-fascist fronts" and "united fronts," which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

- * With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organisation, whether "official" or "rank and file," serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggle.

- * In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

- * Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social crisis with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organized mass action by the proletariat.

- * The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

- * The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean "self-management" or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

- * The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to "organise

the working class" nor to "take power" in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat's combat.

Our activity Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.

Organized intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.

The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

Our origins The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the Communist League of Marx and Engels production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

Internationalism

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Bosnian 'peace' process: Capitalism means war and chaos

After the end of bellicose media propaganda around the situation in ex-Yugoslavia in late April and early May—when an immediate military intervention by the US government appeared imminent—a more objective tone surfaced in news reports occupying the columns of newspapers and the airwaves of the TV news-broadcasts in America. There was a retreat from the ever-so-dramatic call for a strong military intervention to save Bosnia in the name of the defense of human rights and the unchangeability of national frontiers. On the contrary, attempts were now being made frequently enough to rationalize the barbarism and to explain de facto and widespread recognition of the carving up of the still-born Bosnian state.

However, despite the shift, and in contrast with this changing mood of the American bourgeois media, the massacre in the Balkans continues. The Serbs, Croats and Muslims continue killing each other in Bosnia. The starvation, the terror, the spread of disease are still growing steadily.

Yugoslavia: a taste of the new world disorder

As the Western and Eastern imperialist blocs confronted each other for almost half a century following the end of the second world war, world capitalism made us live with the permanent fear of being wiped out by a nuclear blast. Then, when the Stalinist bloc collapsed, bringing down with it the raison d'être of the Western alliance, the various national governments around the world announced the end of the so-called 'cold war' as the dawn of a new epoch, full of peace and prosperity. Or, in the famous Bush slogan, they celebrated 'a new world order'. But the evolution of the whole international situation since then belies even their most modest promises of peace made at that time, proving what revolutionaries have been saying since World War II: decadent capitalism has nothing to offer to humanity except wars, misery and growing chaos.

Currently, at the heart of capitalism, the most powerful countries on the planet are all being pummeled by the most significant economic downturn since the thirties. The working class of these countries, instead of experiencing the much promised prosperity, is experiencing the most violent attacks on their living and working conditions in the last half century. Unemployment is every where rising. Salaries and social benefits are being cut down; working conditions are worsening. Besides, this economic slump can only get worse as the fiscal and monetary remedies customarily used in the last two decades to counteract the economic crisis, have proved themselves to be used up, unable even to give the slightest illusion of an economic recovery.

Regarding the 'peace and order' promises, the balance sheet of the last few years is as bad or even worse than that for 'prosperity'. The disappearance of the Stalinist and Western military blocs has put in turmoil the whole system of imperialist relationships between

national states that had existed since World War Two ended. The imperialist appetites of the various big and small nations, previously held more or less in check by the discipline of the blocs, are today expressing themselves more and more openly and unrestrained. Second-rate imperialist powers and also the most powerful countries on earth (USA, Germany, France, Japan, Great Britain), are playing their various cards in pursuit of a new imperialist carve-up of the world...fueling age-old ethnic and nationalist rivalries, creating new local wars or throwing oil onto the embers of the conflicts inherited from the cold-war period. The world is sinking into increasing barbarism so as to remind us that war is the way of life of decadent capitalism and imperialism is an integral part of the political behavior of every nation, big or small.

It is only in this context of growing world chaos and rising imperialist conflicts that we can really grasp all the implications of the barbarity unfolding in what used to be Yugoslavia.

Behind the nationalist aberrations of the Serbs, Croats and Muslims stand the imperialist machinations of the greatest imperialist sharks.

The end of the cold-war period sounded the death-knell for the patchwork that was known as Yugoslavia. The different bourgeois cliques that had previously benefitted from Tito's Stalinist policy of suppression of ethnic and national expressions, quickly transformed themselves into the most violent defenders of nationalistic particularisms. Their drive to grab as much as they can out of the Yugoslavian corpse, under the cover of national, ethnic and religious differences, making cannon fodder of the working masses who are always the ones to bear the brunt of the massacres and suffering coming out of the confrontation between fractions of the ruling classes) has been an essential factor in the creation of the quagmire in which this region has sunk.

Not all of the responsibility for the violence and chaos rests on the imperialist dreams of a great nation of the Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian bourgeoisies. Behind them, animating, supporting and maneuvering for their own imperialist goals are the dominant classes of the mightiest imperialist powers.

The secession from Yugoslavia of Slovenia and Croatia, encouraged from the onset by Austria, Italy and, above all, Germany, started the death dance in the Balkans. The Serbian government in Belgrade, basing itself on a numerically strong Serbian minority in the Croatian territory, answered this independentist drive by engaging in a murderous war with Croatia. The German bourgeoisie's support of Slovenian and Croatian national independence was neither accidental nor born out of any concern about the right of nations to self-determination. On the contrary, it fit perfectly with the new role as a central pole of imperialist attraction that Germany has been called to play with the end of the cold-war and the American and USSR-led imperialist alliances. In

the instability of Yugoslavia, the German dominant class saw the opportunity to recover its traditional sphere of influence in the Balkan region and, more importantly, the possibility of getting an outlet through the Croatian ports, to the strategic waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

This move of German imperialism was strongly counteracted by the other principal imperialist powers.

Thus the US, Great Britain and even France (Germany's closest major ally) gave their discreet support to Serbia in its war against Croatia. This position of the American bourgeoisie against Germany has a very clear foundation: as the world's dominant imperialist power, it has a fundamental interest in hindering the strengthening of Germany and blocking the tendency toward the formation of a national superpower.

Great Britain, which is America's principal European ally, at this point had no essential differences with American policy. Thus it found itself firmly in-synch with the Americans. The position of France is more complicated. On the one hand, the French bourgeoisie on the general strategic level of imperialism world realignments was already tending to choose its side with Germany (thus against the US); yet, on the other hand, like the Americans, it also has a crucial interest in checking the strengthening of German imperialism. This contradictory position of France comes from the characteristics of the Franco-German marriage of convenience, into which France has brought its military capabilities and Germany its powerful economy. Thus the French are hoping that by keeping for itself the position of Mediterranean power, it can maintain a certain relation of parity in its alliance with Germany.

Russia is an historic ally of Serbia, so at this stage, its involvement in the war it didn't run counter to US interests. The situation was therefore relatively simple. With one-third of Croatia overrun by Serbia the status-quo established by the peace-fire agreement was fairly satisfactory to American imperialism.

American imperialism's set-back on Bosnia

The spread of the war to Bosnia-Herzegovina made things a lot more complex. Now the stage has changed: the former warring bourgeoisies of Croatia and Serbia this time had found in the carving up of Bosnia a common ground to work together. But while Germany continued to back its Croatian ally, America decided to change horses, abandoning Serbia in favor of an independent, democratic and multi-ethnic Bosnian state; which in practice meant giving its support to the Bosnian Muslims. This sudden change of US policy in the Yugoslav war had as a central aim, under the cover of humanitarianism and the defense of Bosnia, of providing American imperialism with an alibi to intervene directly in the situation, establishing Bosnia as its first real foothold in the region. Besides, such a new show of military force on the part of the US would force the hands of the European powers by compelling them to line up behind its leadership.

demonstrating at the same time the impotence of Europe as a whole as well as of that of the individual powers.

However, despite all the ideological, diplomatic and military maneuvers, at the end American imperialism has not only failed to intervene, but has had to accept the carving up of Bosnia as was symbolically stated by the May Washington accord signed by US, Britain, Russia, France and Spain.

Currently, the situation has come to a point at which it seems only a matter of days before a formal partition of Bosnia between Croatia, Serbia (which will both benefit the most) and the Muslims is made.

The principal reason for this US set-back—as we pointed out in our last issue with regard to the last conflict in the Balkans—was put into question its long accepted offensive for intervening in Bosnia—is the sabotage of American initiatives carried out by the other great imperialist powers, which have no interest in supporting America objectives in Bosnia.

Germany's reasons for opposing American interests in the Balkans need no more explanation. Given the imperialist trend toward the formation of two imperialist blocs around these two countries, the US and Germany are doomed to clash each day more openly on the world stage. France, while it opposes Germany's move to become a power on the Mediterranean sea, has no interest in letting the US establish a direct presence in the Balkan region. Thus France has consistently sought to torpedo every US initiative, while discreetly using its own ground troops in Bosnia to support Serbian forces by disarming the Muslim militia.

Russia throughout the Yugoslavian war has not essentially put into question its long standing alliance with Serbia, even if in the present conditions of political chaos in Russia itself its support can only be very weak. It has been only after winning the April referendum that the Teltzin faction has begun putting Russian policy more in line with that of America.

Great Britain, the closest and most faithful ally of the US, has

vg 7

INSIDE:

SPECIAL 4-PAGE REPORT ON THE NATIONAL SITUATION

STARTS ON PAGE 3

Nationalist and nuclear nightmare

The situation in the ex-USSR is a good example of what the 'victory of capitalism' really is: a chaotic and bloody mess that is continually getting worse. Yeltsin and his faction of 'reformers' have, with the support of the US and Britain, strengthened their position a little on the basis of a recent referendum and proposals for a new draft constitution. This declares that the president can "take such measures as required by circumstances". Such a democrat is worthy of the support of Major and Clinton!

Yeltsin's position has also been strengthened, or rather, become a touch less fragile, from his successful manoeuvring of the republics and regions of the ex-USSR. But even within this relative 'success' the situation reads like a catalogue of disasters that can only get more and more out of control.

Yeltsin has proposed that the republics and regions are "equal in their relations" precisely because the Russian bourgeoisie have to deal with a break-up that's happening in front of their eyes. Attempts to prevent disintegration are hopeless, as is shown when even relatively stable regions of Russia itself, like Vologda, want to opt for independence under a local nationalist faction.

Renewed fighting recently broke out in the

Chechen republic where, 2 years ago, president Dudayev threatened to bomb Russian nuclear installations with the bombers he held onto from the break-up of the country from 1989. As the crisis deepens, so all the tin pot gangsters like Dudayev will provoke more fighting and bloodshed under the banner of nationalism.

Tensions are increasing in Moldavia and in the Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad, and war continues, largely unreported, in the Abkhazian province of Georgia.

Azerbaijan, after undergoing a series of defeats in its war with Armenia over the disputed territory of the High Karabakh, is descending into even greater chaos. Thousands of people killed for nothing in the war for Azeri nationalism. 10% of the territory lost, hyper-inflation, the collapse of its currency and widespread starvation have plunged this region into a war between factions of the Azeri ruling class using tanks, artillery and ground to ground missiles.

The new Azeri leader emerging from this bloodshed, is Aliyev, an ex-member of Brezhnev's politburo. He appears to be favoured by Yeltsin (and the US and Britain) because of oil exploration going on in the area. Aliyev's 'Popular Front' opponents have threatened to keep fighting and, as the situation in Azerbaijan

deteriorates, the Armenians, ignoring a Russian/US/Turkish agreed cease-fire, have restarted fighting over the High Karabakh. Azerbaijan is a forest of what Russia faces was between and within republics based on local nationalist factions with bigger sharks swimming close by. The most potentially dangerous confrontation looming is that between the Ukraine and Russia. The Ukraine is currently sitting on 1500 nuclear warheads, 41 strategic bombers and a number of intercontinental ballistic missiles, some of which have already been reprogrammed and re-coded for Ukrainian control. The Ukraine has also increased its massive conventional army which is already three times larger than Russia's European forces.

With 1600% inflation, a busted 'new' currency and massive shortages, the situation is unstable and dangerous. The Ukraine is beginning to formulate a serious claim to become an 'independent nuclear power' and, in this process, it has been quickly supported by Germany and, to a lesser extent, France.

The USA knows what's going on here and, with Russia, which sees the 1991 independence of the Ukraine as 'temporary', is pushing for the latter to ratify the START treaty and give up its nuclear weapons. It is unlikely to do so in the

near future. In mid-June, Ukrainian president Kravchuk issued a decree taking personal control of 'all non-economic forces', that is, the armed forces and the police.

A strike which started and rapidly spread over prices and pay has been diverted and manoeuvred, mainly by the pro-Russian factions in the east and south, calling for 'regional autonomy' from the Ukraine (which would suit the USA and Russia). Kravchuk meanwhile has told the workers that "the Ukraine is in danger". Workers would be crazy to listen to the lies of nationalists and autonomists and take up the steps of their dance of death.

The major powers are only beginning to intervene in the ex-USSR because the situation is so explosive. However, Germany and the USA recognise what's at stake in the Ukraine and lesser powers like Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are becoming more involved in the southern edges of the ex-USSR.

This is the 'victory of capitalism': nationalist poison and nuclear menace, chaos and militarism involving the pettiest nationalist crooks and the largest imperialist powers. MS

Racist attacks in Germany show decomposition at the heart of the system

The murder of five members of a Turkish family in Solingen, as well as the subsequent riots and the further attacks on Turks in other parts of Germany, are a clear demonstration of the way that global chaos has penetrated even into the central countries of world capitalism.

During daily protests and demonstrations Turkish youth have confronted the police and burnt German flags. There have been violent confrontations between Turkish right and left wingers during these demonstrations. One of the attacks on the home of a Turkish family in Hamburg turned out to have been the work of the Turkish rightwing "Grey Wolves" against their Stalinist rivals. In response to all this, the German right wingers have launched further attacks on Turkish and immigrant homes.

Within the working class as a whole, there have been feelings of helplessness and horror in the face of all this mayhem. Such feelings are being actively encouraged by the bourgeois media in its attempts to get support for police action, to improve relations between Germany and Turkey, and to get support for the recently adopted near elimination of asylum rights "in

order to prevent the problem of ethnic violence getting even bigger".

The German state can't stop the chaos. Neither the murders in Solingen, nor the riots which followed them are in the general interests of the German state. The fact that the bourgeoisie is unable to prevent these developments is a telling sign of the degree to which the tendency toward chaos has infected a country which, up to now has been remarkable for its stability.

The deaths in Solingen could not have come at worse moment for the German state, coming as they did during declarations of the historic friendship between Turkey and Germany. Because of the existence of over a million Turkish "guest workers" and their families in Germany, people in Turkey are very sensitive to what happens to Turks in Germany. Recent events will tend to undermine the strengthening of the German-Turkish alliance, and certainly US imperialism has the most to benefit from any difficulties in this relationship. It cannot therefore be ruled out that US secret services have been meddling in the affair.

Workers must draw the lessons. For the working class, the defeats of the steel workers and miners in the west, and of the metal workers strike in the east, still have to be digested. There is a real bewilderment and disorientation within the working class and these latest events will increase the impact of these defeats and make it more difficult for workers to draw the lessons.

However, the extent of the recession and the severity of the attacks on workers' jobs and conditions will not push the question of the class struggle into the background for long. Although there has been some development of Turkish nationalism, particularly among youth not integrated into production, the majority of Turkish "guest workers" remain rooted in the production process and thus have strong feelings of class identity. The capacity of workers, of whatever origin, to struggle together, remains intact, as has already been shown in the steel, mining and other sectors. LA

ICC intervention in German workers' struggle

As in several other major industrial countries, there has been a growing militancy on the part of the working class in Germany. This militancy has been expressed in a number of strikes and demonstrations, in both the east and the west of Germany. There have also been maneuvers of the unions against the class struggle. In the article below, we want to give readers of 'Internationalism' an idea of the intervention of the ICC's section in Germany and the response of workers across the country.

A leaflet with a political orientation Apart from selling *Weltrevolution*, the publication of the ICC in Germany, and numerous discussions with workers, a leaflet was produced in the second week of the metal workers' strike. The leaflet insisted on the need to struggle, but not on a capitalist basis; not through different sectors of workers rivaling each other, but in a unified and effective movement. There is a need for a greater understanding of the bankruptcy of the system (shown in the capitalist economic crisis), the gravity of the situation (demonstrated by events in ex-Yugoslavia) and of the need to develop an alternative (communism).

The main motivation for the leaflet at this particular moment was the fact that while there

was real militancy and some reflection within the class, workers as a whole have almost no understanding of the strategy of the bourgeoisie and do not question the actions of the unions. The leaflet aimed to deal with these problems and give a political orientation in an important but very difficult situation, indicating the lessons for the struggle and what is necessary for future movements.

Many different responses from workers During the second week of the metal workers strike the IG Metall union organised a "day of solidarity". In the east "solidarity festivals" had been organised right down to the smallest provincial village. In the west there were demonstrations of 25,000 at Volkswagen in Wolfsburg and 10,000 each in Bremen, Kassel and Rheinhausen.

Partly this reflected a genuine sense of solidarity in the west, particularly with a more class conscious minority becoming aware that as well as an east and a west there is a working class which is being attacked wherever it is.

However, we must not exaggerate how this process has developed. The action of IG Metall was an attempt to involve workers in the west in a defeat in the east.

In the east of the country itself workers in

different areas responded in different ways. In Magdeburg, for example, a very real down and depressed city, with many older people among the unemployed, the mood was "Honecker was bad enough, but western capitalism is much worse". Few illusions are left about the west now. Everybody was full of enthusiasm about the metal strike, saying they would join in immediately if they had work. Of course, we replied that they could join in anyway.

This might sound promising, but it isn't everything. Everyone was for the strike, but also convinced that it would end without fail in a terrible defeat. This didn't seem to bother anyone. For them the aim of the strike was to "save the honour of the east" much more than to defend workers' living conditions.

Also, despite a realism about western capitalism, there are still illusions about Stalinism. The older workers turned towards the Stalinist past, youth towards the fascist past, wanting either to repeat it or prevent its repetition.

In Hennigsdorf and Oranienburg, industrial suburbs to the north of Berlin, we had many discussions, including many heated debates with workers involved in strikes and occupations. There are still many workers who are very suspicious of communists, and in the east we still have to clearly distinguish ourselves from Sta-

linism.

Even more clearly in this area is the nationalist angle of the wage demands, where the demands are around not so much the defence of living standards as the desire to show that those in the east are not "second class Germans". Some saw the struggle as the east against the west.

In general, throughout the strike movement in the east, there was a real willingness to discuss. However, this was linked to a conviction of the inevitability of the defeat in the face of a western capitalism which many seemed to respect and fear much more than ever they feared the Stasi.

Also, where, in the west, the resentment against eastern German workers is declining, even if slowly, in the east the anti-west resentment is actually growing. As we have said before, the force towards the unification of struggles will come from the impact of the economic crisis and will develop from the west rather than the east.

Above all, the intervention of revolutionaries, trying to understand the mood of workers and providing a political orientation for the struggle and the development of class consciousness, will be an absolutely essential part of the class movements unfolding today. LA

International Review 73

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